

# THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION



GEORGE OTTO TREVELYAN

A reissue in one volume of a six-volume work,  
edited, arranged and with an introduction and notes by

**RICHARD B. MORRIS**

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# THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

by George Otto Trevelyan

*edited by* Richard B. Morris

In 1897, at the age of 59, a retired English politician and Cabinet Minister began a study of the struggle for American independence which reached completion seventeen years and six volumes later. His name was George Otto Trevelyan, nephew by marriage of Thomas Babington Macaulay, and father of the late historian George Macaulay Trevelyan. Despite all that has since been written on the Revolution, this work casts the same spell over the reader that it did over Theodore Roosevelt, who considered the British author "one of the few blessed exceptions to the rule that the readable historian is not truthful."

This abridgment aims at including the more original and enticing sections of the multivolume work—those pages that capture, as the editor says, "a frivolous and venal society, a corrupt political system, and a stubborn and myopic King—all set off against an idyllic if not over-idealized picture of American society." Most of the military treatment is omitted, as other readily available books deal with this

*(continued on back flap)*







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A condensation into one volume  
of the original six-volume work.

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by Richard B. Morris

Gouverneur Morris Professor of History,  
Columbia University

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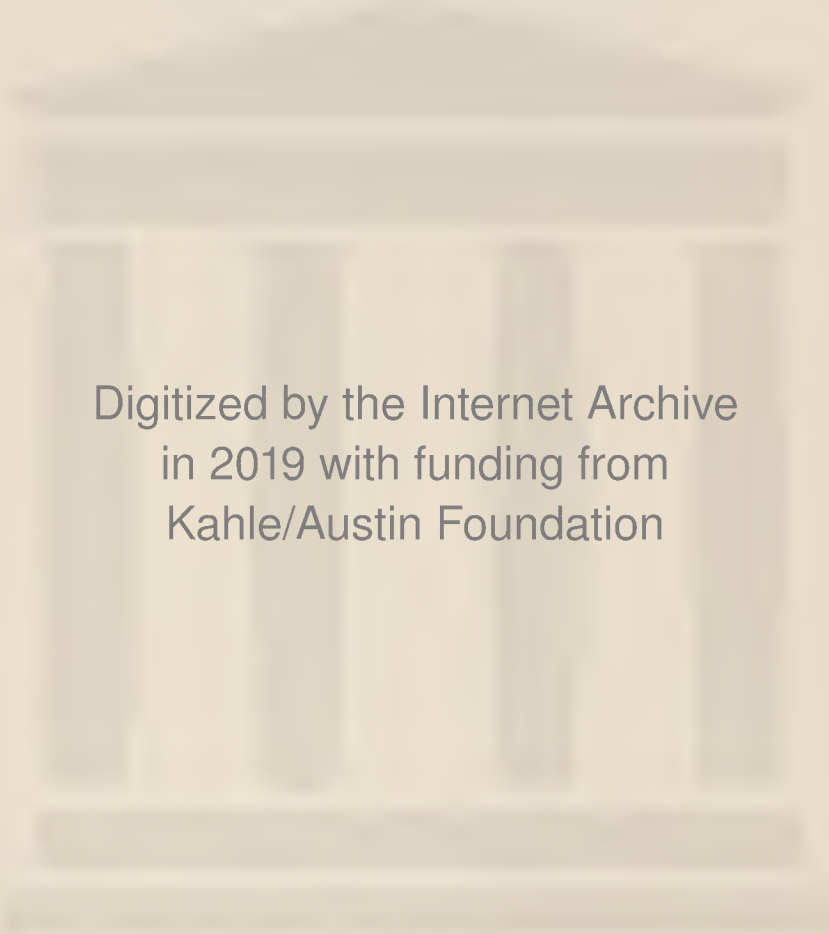
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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THEODORE ROOSEVELT, who made no secret of his conviction that history should be "literature of a very high type," considered his friend Sir George Otto Trevelyan to be "one of the few blessed exceptions to the rule that the readable historian is not truthful." Acknowledging the receipt of one of the volumes of Trevelyan's magnum opus, *The American Revolution*, the American President wrote the British author: "I look forward to reading it as eagerly as any girl ever looks forward to reading the last volume of a favorite novel."

Although two generations and two world wars have intervened between the original publication of Trevelyan's six-volume account of *The American Revolution* and its present reissue in abridged form, and although literary tastes have altered and historical scholarship ripened, *The American Revolution* still casts its spell over the reader as it did in T.R.'s day. Despite all that has been written since this monumental study was first conceived, no other volumes have succeeded in capturing as faithfully the drama, the wit, and the manners of the generation that governed and lost the first British Empire. Nowhere else will one find a more sympathetic treatment of the British opponents of King and Ministry, whose stand may be said to have turned a revolution in America into a civil war in England.

To say that the publication of Trevelyan's *The American Revolution* marked an international event in history and belles lettres, would scarcely be doing full justice to the work's impact. It was something more than absorbing reading on a topic of mutual interest to Englishmen and Americans. It constituted a bridge to renewed understanding between the British and American peoples, thrown up at a time when

a great diplomatic rapprochement between the two nations was in the course of being cemented.

The decade following the year 1897, during which the volumes of *The American Revolution* made their appearance, was crucial both for Great Britain and America. Germany, Continental behemoth, suddenly loomed large on the world horizon, threatening Britain's naval and maritime supremacy as well as the European balance of power so delicately reassembled by the old Congress of Vienna. Almost overnight British anger against the United States, fanned to a white flame by President Grover Cleveland's flamboyant intervention in the boundary dispute between Venezuela and England, had been deflected against Kaiser Wilhelm II for his gratuitous expression of sympathy for the Boers with whom the British were then warring. The War with Spain created a new empire for America. With enlarged overseas responsibilities for Americans came a growing awareness of imperial problems, and a more open-minded attitude toward the British Empire, old or new.

That historic and lasting entente with England, then inaugurated, found reflection on this side of the Atlantic in more dispassionate writing by historians. The old British Empire was treated with greater objectivity, even open sympathy, the causes of the American Revolution were reexamined in a less partisan atmosphere, and even the long-maligned Loyalists received their due. Reflections of this renunciation of the older chauvinism as well as a more balanced treatment of an ancient quarrel were found in the historical works of such writers as Moses Coit Tyler, George Louis Beer, Sydney George Fisher, Claude Halstead Van Tyne, Herbert L. Osgood, and Charles M. Andrews. Similarly, in England, where the American Revolution understandably had never been a popular literary or historical subject, the reading public had been put into a more receptive and tolerant frame of mind by the immensely popular *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, by W.E.H. Lecky, written from the point of view of an unreconstructed Whig.

That Sir George Otto Trevelyan's *The American Revolution* joined literary artistry with political intention was no happy accident. Such a combination of objectives came perhaps naturally to one who was both a Macaulay and a Trevelyan, and who was reared in an atmosphere where letters and learning were inseparably related to the career of politics. Trevelyan's mother was Hannah More Macaulay, and he himself was born in 1838 at Rothley Temple, in Leicestershire, where

Thomas Babington Macaulay, his "Uncle Tom," had first seen the light of day thirty-eight years before. George's father, Charles Trevelyan, came of a wealthy and prominent country family from Cornwall. Charles's courtship of Hannah More Macaulay began in Calcutta in 1834, when he was in the Indian service.

Macaulay has described Sir George's father as "judicious and honest," a man without small talk, "full of schemes of moral and political improvements," his zeal boiling over "in all his talk." Even in courtship, so Macaulay reported, his topics were "steam navigation, the education of the natives, the equalization of the sugar duties, the substitution of the Roman for the Arabic alphabet in the Oriental languages." While this approach might have repelled most other girls, not so Hannah More Macaulay, long accustomed herself to serious talk. A man of rugged integrity and moral purpose, Sir Charles left his stamp on both the Home and Indian Civil Service. In the home in which George Otto spent his childhood, the ideals of a reforming public servant were respected as well as cherished.

It was young George's good fortune that his bachelor Uncle Tom lived with the Trevelyans and contributed to making theirs one of the more book-loving households of England. To keep up with Macaulay's historical and literary allusions and his encyclopedic range of interests, the youngster was driven to solid reading, much of it historical. Both Macaulay and his brother-in-law advocated civil service reform, and the evangelical faith shared by Trevelyans and Macaulays heightened the reformist zeal of George's family.

Harrow, followed by Trinity College, Cambridge, offered scope for George Otto Trevelyan's literary talents. It is perhaps idle now to speculate on the direction his early career might have taken had he won the fellowship to which his academic distinction seemed to entitle him. When his candidacy proved unsuccessful, he snatched at the opportunity to go out to India as private secretary to his father, who was returning to that country to serve as financial member of the Council. From India, George sent back a vivid account of the Anglo-Indian world immediately after the Mutiny, published both in magazine and book form.

Trevelyan had now seen politics at firsthand and found it to his taste. On his return to England, he won a seat in the House of Commons in the election of 1865, running as a Liberal member from Tyne-mouth. Then, from 1868 until 1886, he represented the Scottish Border Boroughs. It was during his first election campaign that he met Car-

oline Philips, daughter of a Lancashire merchant and politician. It was a headlong courtship, but Caroline's rich uncle, who still held his younger brother in leading strings, vetoed the marriage. He aspired high for his niece. Nothing less than a peer was acceptable.

The disheartened suitor, like so many Englishmen before him, turned to the Continent to find distraction. He arrived in Italy at the very moment when Garibaldi was invading Roman territory. His meeting with the Italian liberator, with whom he traveled as far as Florence, left an indelible impression upon him. Years later, he acted as cicerone to his talented son George Macaulay Trevelyan. The son later told how his father took him to the Janiculum, where, "among the vineyards that lay around the Porta San Pancrazio, he told me the story of Garibaldi's defense of the Roman Republic, which I had never heard before." One day the son would immortalize these events in an exciting series of books dealing with Garibaldi and the Risorgimento. Trevelyan's courtship had a happy ending. After two years, Caroline's uncle yielded to her pleadings. The wedding took place in September, 1869, and a long and devoted marriage ensued.

It has been in the tradition of British statesmen, from Disraeli to Sir Winston Churchill, to devote whatever leisure the public will afford to creative and historical writing. Disraeli's triumph in 1874 gave active Liberals like Trevelyan some enforced leisure. During the six years when he was a member of the opposition, Trevelyan wrote his *Life of Macaulay* and his *Early History of Charles James Fox*. Then, with Gladstone's return to power, Trevelyan's literary career was put aside in the public interest. On May 6, 1882, Lord Frederick Cavendish, the newly appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland, was assassinated in Dublin's Phoenix Park. To fill the vacant post Gladstone promptly picked Trevelyan. When the new Chief Secretary arrived in Dublin, terrorists still roved with knives about the city's streets. Hatred and distrust had reached an almost incredible pitch in the countryside. Stoutly seconding the efforts of Ireland's Viceroy, Lord Spencer, Trevelyan was determined that law and order must be re-established, but he harbored no illusions that surface obedience held any promise of a genuine solution of this tortured issue. A Cabinet post in 1884 was Trevelyan's reward for his arduous services in Ireland. As Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, an office "without portfolio," Trevelyan boasted that he appointed the first laboringman ever to become a justice of the peace in England. Following the election of 1885, Trevelyan became Secretary for Scotland in the new Glad-



stone Ministry and devoted himself to ending the agrarian grievances of the Scottish Highland tenantry. However, his career in Ireland had left him disenchanted about the merits of Gladstone's Home Rule proposals, and on that issue he left the Cabinet. One might have predicted that a reformer and humanitarian of the stripe of Trevelyan would not make a congenial bedfellow to a motley collection of Conservatives and Unionists. He soon returned to the Liberal camp and even accepted Home Rule for Ireland. Once more, with the Liberals in office between 1892 and 1895, Trevelyan served as Gladstone's Secretary of State for Scotland.

When, in 1897, Trevelyan resigned his seat in the House of Commons to devote himself anew to historical writing, it was generally believed that he would now complete his *Life of Charles James Fox*. Why a man of Trevelyan's standards and gifts should have already devoted so much attention to a politician whose name was a byword for opportunism and amorality may be difficult at this distance to fathom. Trevelyan saw Fox through rosy-hued spectacles. For him he was always the dashing clubman diverting that London society for which the historian had the keenest affection. The fact of the matter is, though, that Trevelyan never carried Fox's biography beyond 1774, the year when the rising young orator, dismissed from the North Ministry, turned away from his old political associates, ultimately to embrace reform and to make himself a hero to the masses and a darling of the Whigs. "Sick of a prison house whose secrets had so early been familiar to him," Trevelyan, ending on a stout Whiggish note, tells us how Fox "dissolved his partnership with Sandwich and Wedderburn, and united himself to Burke, and Chatham, and Savile in their crusade against the tyranny which was trampling out English liberty in the colonies, and the corruption which was undermining it at home." One might almost have been listening to Burke or Savile or Dunning thundering their denunciations of Crown and Ministry before a spellbound House of Commons, and indeed a good deal of the rhetoric of Trevelyan's political idols brushed off on Trevelyan the historian.

A far nobler theme than the life of Charles James Fox cried out for treatment in the grand manner and offered Trevelyan at last full scope for his literary talents. This was the great struggle for American independence acted out on a world stage. Trevelyan courageously initiated this study when he was already fifty-nine years of age and did not complete it until he was seventy-six. Reverting in title if not in

full treatment to his original theme, Trevelyan called his last two volumes *George the Third and Charles James Fox*, but, as his subtitle revealed, they were in fact his concluding volumes on the American Revolution. In his six-volume account of the War for Independence, Trevelyan dealt full justice to the Patriot cause while at the same time making clear that large numbers of the British people were neither responsible for the measure of coercion that brought on the war nor for needlessly prolonging the conflict once it had begun. *The American Revolution* proved absorbing reading. Its diverting pages captured a frivolous and venal society, a corrupt political system, and a stubborn and myopic King—all set off against an idyllic if not overidealized picture of American society. It was truly a work in the great Whig tradition, one that Macaulay himself would have applauded unreservedly.

If the work of the historian is part science, part art, it can only be executed in depth if the historian himself possesses judgment, or, as George Macaulay Trevelyan once put it, if the historian is also a philosopher “who has the right kind of bias.” It is the virtue of George Otto Trevelyan that he never concealed his bias. With Lord Acton, he would have insisted that his historical bias was for the moral law, impartially applied. It is this certainty of conviction in matters of morality, more fitting to the days of Queen Victoria than to those of George III, which finds expression on every page of *The American Revolution*. To Trevelyan there was right and wrong, black and white, and, as his son observed, “he did not take much account of nuances.” If the Patriots in his pages emerge perhaps too pure and undefiled, and the North Ministry is painted with colors a bit too deep-dyed as a collection of rogues, scoundrels, and dunderheads; if Whigs on both sides of the great ocean are portrayed as engaged in fighting for a concept of the British Constitution which the King and his supporters, with some justice, considered archaic, the sense of drama is heightened by these contrasts, and it is left for others to set the balance true.

*The American Revolution* made its appearance on both sides of the Atlantic at a time when historical scholarship, trained in the new scientific methodology and nurtured in graduate seminars, was beginning to eschew rhetoric or even any pretense to literary style, and a rift was deepening between academicians and popularizers. The aim of the new scholarship was nothing more nor less than complete objectivity and absolute detachment. Hence, American scholars could be expected to greet this admittedly popular multivolume contribution to their own history with mixed feelings. They found in *The American Revolution*



the same charm, the same wealth of allusions, the same extraordinary capacity for coining epigrams, as in Trevelyan's earlier studies of Macaulay and Fox. Frederick Jackson Turner recognized the "important popular influence" that the work was certain to exert and hailed it as "the most effective presentation of the fact that the struggle for independence was in truth a phase of a struggle between two great English parties, fought out on both sides of the water: in the mother country in the forum, in the colonies on the field of battle." On the other hand, Turner gently chided Trevelyan for showing a lack of discrimination between the different geographical sections of America, for overstressing the democratic tendencies of New England and minimizing the aristocratic atmosphere prevailing in other sections. Other reviewers also questioned whether Trevelyan knew the America of Washington and Hancock as well as he did the London of Fox and Burke. Nor did the value of the book for American readers rest upon its narration of military campaigns. It was generally agreed by American reviewers that the work's chief interest and significance lay in its masterly treatment of English politics.

While conceding that in no previous systematic history of the Revolution had as much attention been paid to the character of the American soldier and to the system and leadership under which he fought as in Trevelyan's account, Herbert L. Osgood felt that the work lacked balance, that it failed to pay attention to administrative and constitutional issues, to treat adequately the collapse of royal power in the various colonies, and the rise of new Revolutionary governments. In short, it was the consensus of the American reviewers that, rather than offering a systematic or rounded history of the War of the Revolution, Trevelyan's work was a collection of suggestive essays or studies on important social and military aspects of the struggle, frankly partisan, but written with grace and power, even bearing a striking resemblance to the style and plan of Macaulay's great history of England.

In England, Henry James hailed the artistry of *The American Revolution* as installments appeared. "The American, the Englishman, the artist, and the critic in me," he wrote Sir George, "to say nothing of the friend—all drink you down in a deep draught, each in turn feeling that he is more deeply concerned." James went on to point out that it was "this literary temper" of the work, "this beautiful quality of composition, and feeling of the presentation, grasping reality all the whole, and controlling and playing with detail—it is this in our chattering and slobbering day that gives me the sense of the ampler tread and deeper

voice of the man—in fact of his speaking in his own voice at all, or moving with his own step. You will make my own country people touch as with reverence the hem of his garment.” What James confessed that he envied most was Trevelyan’s “method,” his being able “to see so many facts and yet to see them each, imaged, and related, and lighted as a painter sees the objects, together before his canvas. They become, I mean, so amusingly concrete and individual for you; but that is just the unscrutable luxury of your book.”

For most of the British reading public, on the other hand, parts of *The American Revolution* must have come as a great shock. They were unaccustomed to admiring, even affectionate, portraits of the leaders who had rebelled against their King. They would hardly expect one of their own writers to offer so discerning an analysis of the functioning of the rebel Congress that their King had so long refused to recognize, to encounter so sympathetic a treatment of colonial grievances, or to find the activities of the North Ministry scored as a series of muffed opportunities.

Accordingly, one would expect some revisionist judgments of Trevelyan’s work to appear from time to time. More recently in the wake of the massive assault on the Whig interpretation of history led by Sir Lewis Namier and his disciples have come some modifications of Trevelyan’s analysis of the British Constitutional and party systems. Since Trevelyan’s day, scholars have subjected to microscopic examination the Constitutional structure of England in the reign of George III. Their conclusions have relevance to what was the nub of Trevelyan’s argument—namely, that the system of corruption developed to a high degree under George III had resulted in subverting the original Constitution. Namier, while conceding that George III may have been more active as an election manager than his grandfather, insists that the difference was one of degree only. He argues that at the beginning of the reign of George III the right of the King to choose whatever ministers he wished stood uncontested, and that while there was a Whig and Tory mentality in 1760, the party system did not exist, merely political faction. Both the two-party system, as we know it, and the principle of Cabinet responsibility postdate the American Revolution.

The Namierites would not deny the existence of influence, even of corruption. Through its system of patronage the Crown controlled the disposal of numerous posts, and admittedly its influence was there to be reckoned with. In fact, unless you were a member sitting for a

private or pocket borough you could not be wholly free of it. Instead of stigmatizing corruption as undermining the Constitution, which was how Burke as well as Trevelyan viewed it, Sir Lewis Namier would accept these traditional corrupt practices as "a mark of English freedom and independence, for no one bribes where he can bully."

On this conflict the revisionists pass no moral judgment unlike their Whig-minded predecessors of Victorian and Edwardian times. They have been content with minute studies into the origins and background of members of Parliament and the disposal of patronage. Their critics feel that in following their close and tortuous course one may well lose sight of the great political principles around which the various Whig factions rallied, and fail to recognize that what contemporaries thought the British Constitution really was has perhaps more relevance for the years of the American Revolution than what the principal actors should have thought had they known what we know today.

It is the great virtue of George Otto Trevelyan's *The American Revolution* that, while he was not prepared to do the kind of extraordinary digging that Sir Lewis Namier did in unearthing so many new facts about the election of 1761 or Richard Pares, Herbert Butterfield, John Brooke, and Ian R. Christie have prosecuted for the years that followed, or Sir Keith Feiling has assembled to illuminate the path taken by the second Tory party, he never took his eye off the main road. He never for a moment lets the reader forget the great principles that animated Burke and Fox and Rockingham and Shelburne, as well as Franklin, and John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson. He elevates the civil war among Englishmen above the level of a petty family quarrel and shows its profound implications for America, for the empire, and for the world.

Trevelyan in this work has given us so very much in richness of detail and vigor of interpretation that it is perhaps ungenerous to express regret that he did not tell us even more, that he did not pursue the story of the peacemaking after Yorktown, so extraordinary an opportunity for his epigrammatic flashes and keen insights. Instead, he is content to end on a note of high optimism, with the King thwarted and the North Ministry unseated. Early in February of 1782, Lord North introduced his last budget and asked for another enormous war loan. His action evoked this incisive comment from Trevelyan:

The war in Europe had gone against us; the attitude of the Northern Powers was hostile and minatory; and, after Yorktown,

all prospect of recovering our rebellious Colonies by arms was further off than ever. Such were the circumstances under which, if the King had his way, England was never to make peace with America as long as the Chancellor of the Exchequer could negotiate a loan on the money-market. Our people had come to regard the Cabinet as the shareholders of a coal-mine on the sea-coast, when the water which floods the galleries begins to taste of salt, would regard a board of Directors who persisted in trying to pump out the German Ocean. Parliament at last took the matter into its own hands, and stopped the Ministers in their mad career. It was not a day too soon for the interests of the Treasury. Lord Sheffield,—the friend of Gibbon, a staunch adherent of Lord North, and a specialist in the statistics of foreign and colonial commerce,—reckoned that the increase of the National Debt entailed on Great Britain by the American war, and by the wars arising out of it, amounted to forty-five times the average annual value of British exports to the American colonies during the six years that preceded the military occupation of Boston. That is the measure, as expressed in arithmetical figures, of the foresight and capacity displayed by George the Third and his chosen servants.

Having rid the country of the North Ministry, whose blundering ineptitude he had spelled out for us in six volumes, Trevelyan was understandably buoyant about the Rockingham Ministry that succeeded it. It was this Ministry that initiated the peace talks that finally brought a long world war to an end. What we do not learn from these pages, though, because the story stops short of the event, is that the refusal of Trevelyan's hero, Charles James Fox, to serve under the Earl of Shelburne when the Marquis of Rockingham died after only a few months in office, splintered the reform coalition. Our author ends too soon to let us in on the fact that, by joining forces with his political enemy Lord North, Fox, more out of spite than in deference to the public good, had formed a preposterous combination to bring down his abler, if politically maladroit, rival. The North-Fox coalition was the most egregious blunder of Charles James Fox's career, and its consequences were equally fateful for the Whig cause in England. Ahead lay years of uninterrupted Tory rule under the brilliant leadership of the younger Pitt.

The note of triumph upon which Trevelyan ends his great work is for him as deeply personal as it was for the Whig leaders of that day



who thought they had retrieved Constitutional victory from military disaster. To dispel the illusion would be both uncharitable and anti-climactic. "And thus," our author concludes, "the Ministers who had brought our country down from the heights of glory and prosperity to the Valley of the Shadow of Disaster, at length were expelled from office, and were succeeded by a Government pledged to restore the independence of Parliament, to re-establish the naval supremacy of Great Britain, to pacify Ireland, and to end the quarrel with America."

In the preparation of this one-volume abridgment of *The American Revolution*, the editor has endeavored to include the more original and enticing sections of the multivolume work and to sacrifice those segments that now, in the light of critical judgments and more recent literature, seem expendable. *The Early History of Charles James Fox*, which takes that statesman down to the year 1774, has been excluded. It is affectionate biography. It is penetrating social history, but it has little or nothing to do with the coming of the American Revolution. Fox and the world in which he shone are superbly drawn for us when the young orator reemerges as an opposition leader, and that account has been preserved. Most of the military treatment has been excised. The reader can find most of these events treated more succinctly and with greater depth in other readily available books on the Revolution. The editor has tried to keep the focus on politics, manners, and ideas, the areas where Trevelyan's master touch is most apparent and wherein he is generally considered to have made his most enduring contribution.

One might begin the American Revolution with the Writs of Assistance Case, or Parson's Cause, or the Sugar Act of 1764, or the Tea Act of '73. Trevelyan has picked as good a beginning as any one—the fall of Rockingham's first Ministry after the apparent reconciliation of Colonies and Mother Country resultant upon the repeal of the Stamp Act. Soon Charles Townshend, that "master of the revels in the House of Commons," gratuitously raises the issue of taxation without representation all over again, this time with the passage of his notorious customs duties.

*The American Revolution* evokes memorable moments in a great struggle for independence, fought by Patriots on this side of the Atlantic with the covert and in some cases avowed support of sympathizers in Great Britain. It nails to the canvas some extraordinary personalities. It captures the social and political scene in the Age of George III with grace, wit, and penetration. We are transported in

time to a day when it was the mark of a fashionable Whig, as Horace Walpole put it, to live at Brooks's, "where politics were sown, and in the House of Commons, where the crop came up." At Brooks's, Charles James Fox might usually be found, and there gentlemen "were welcome to go on losing as long as the most sanguine of their adversaries were willing to trust them." "A statesman of the Georgian era," Trevelyan pointed out in his *Charles James Fox*, "was sailing on a sea of claret from one comfortable official haven to another, at a period of life when a political apprentice in the reign of Victoria is not yet out of his indentures."

Some of these statesmen—little people as Lewis Namier saw them, chosen "by a dark fate" to play a role beyond their comprehension—we meet at close range in these pages. We observe the operations of Lord Weymouth, Secretary of State for the Northern Department, a man entrusted with half the work done later by the whole Foreign Office and with the undivided charge of the internal administration of the kingdom, who somehow managed to booze till daylight and doze into the afternoon. We meet the avaricious Rigby, Paymaster of the Forces, reputed to have made twenty thousand a year during the whole time the war lasted, and yet never knowing what it was to be solvent. "A Government whose mainstay in Parliament was the Right Honourable Richard Rigby," Trevelyan instructs us, "and whose tactics were settled for it by an inner Cabinet of Bedfords, sitting over their burgundy in Lord Sandwich's parlour at the Admiralty, was not likely to observe the laws of fair play in dealing with the reputation of a political adversary." Of the pensioned pamphleteers who fought the battles of the Ministry by libeling the opposition, Trevelyan's severest epithets are reserved for John Shebbeare. "His first literary effort was a lampoon on the surgeon from whom he had received a medical education; and his last was entitled 'The Polecat Detected'; which was a libel and not (as might have been supposed), an autobiography."

With pardonable British bias, Trevelyan describes for us the transactions by which Beaumarchais furnished arms, clothing, and other supplies to the Americans, and relates the subsequent negotiations leading to the Franco-American alliance. He finds it an absorbing story of French duplicity and fatuity, followed by retribution. "That million of francs," Sir George tells us, "by the judicious and timely disbursements of which the French Ministry had hoped to inflict a mortal injury on the British power with small cost and danger to themselves, had grown before the affair was finally settled, into a war expenditure

of something very near a milliard and a quarter; and the royal government of France, which had stooped to such unroyal practices, was submerged in an ocean of bankruptcy where it was destined miserably to perish. That was what came of an attempt to fight England on the cheap."

Reading the lively pages of *The American Revolution* afresh is guaranteed to raise questions perhaps quite different from the issues stirred up by the work's original publication. Britons have become reconciled to seeing vast segments of their historic empire gain their independence. Contrariwise, Americans, what with the shrinkage of the old empires, the nationalist strivings of submerged peoples, and the constant strains and stresses of the Cold War, have become accustomed to shouldering burdens whose magnitude would have staggered the imagination of Americans of Trevelyan's day and totally swamped earlier national budgets. Carrying such enormous responsibilities for lands and peoples so very remote, we cannot fail to sympathize with Englishmen of George III's day, struggling under their vast and intricate burdens of empire. Then, too, America's support for the national aspirations of colonial peoples brings home with special timeliness today the issues of the first great war for colonial independence.

Finally, the English-speaking people on both sides of the Atlantic might well reflect on their good fortune that decision-making is no longer confined to a privileged class, as it was in England in the days of George III, and that at long last that community of interest that binds America and England may be proof against divisive forces not unlike those which contributed to the shattering of the first British Empire.

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The  
AMERICAN REVOLUTION



## CHAPTER I

### THE BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS AMERICA. THE SOCIAL CONDITION OF GREAT BRITAIN AND THE COLONIES

IN the spring of 1766 a new chapter of peace and good-will,—the first, as it seemed, of many fair volumes,—had opened before the delighted eyes of all true fellow-countrymen on either side of the Atlantic. “We should find it hard,” so writes an excellent and learned author,<sup>1</sup> “to overstate the happiness which, for a few weeks, filled the hearts of the American people at the news that the detested Stamp Act had been repealed. As, in 1765, through the bond of a common fear, the thirteen colonies had been brought for the first time into some sort of union, so, in 1766, that union was for a while prolonged through the bond of a common joy. Certainly, never before had all these American communities been so swept by one mighty wave of grateful enthusiasm and delight.”

No citizen of America, who recollected anything, forgot how and where he heard the glad tidings. Her history, for a year to come, reads like the golden age. Philadelphia waited for the fourth of June in order to celebrate the King’s Birthday and the repeal of the Stamp Act together. Toasts were drunk to the Royal Family, to Parliament, and to “our worthy and faithful agent, Dr. Franklin.” Franklin, determined that his family should rejoice in real earnest, sent his wife and daughter a handsome present of satins and brocades, to replace the clothes of their own spinning which they had worn while the crisis lasted and while all good patriots refused to buy anything that had come from British ports. John Adams kept the occasion sadly. “A duller day than last Monday, when the Province was in a rapture for the repeal of the Stamp Act, I

<sup>1</sup> Professor Tyler, of Cornell University. His *Literary History of the American Revolution* is a remarkable specimen of the historical faculty and descriptive power which have been expended by Americans on particular features in that great panorama.

do not remember to have passed. My wife, who had long depended on going to Boston, and my little babe, were both very ill of an whooping-cough." But, in his view, the great concession had done its work thoroughly and finally. In November, 1766, after six months' observation of its effects, he wrote: "The people are as quiet and submissive to Government as any people under the sun; as little inclined to tumults, riots, seditions, as they were ever known to be since the first foundation of the Government. The repeal of the Stamp Act has composed every wave of popular disorder into a smooth and peaceful calm."

The mother-country had erred, had suffered, had repented, and had now retrieved her fault. Parliament, at the instance of Lord Rockingham and his colleagues, embodied in a statute the assertion of its own right to make laws binding on the colonies in all cases whatsoever; and then it repealed the Stamp Act, as a practical admission that the right in question should be exercised only in cases where the colonies did not object. The proceeding was intensely English; but unfortunately it lacked the most important condition of a great English compromise, for it was not accepted by the beaten party. George Grenville, the parent of the Stamp-duty, and reputed to be the greatest living master of finance, bitterly resented the reversal of his policy; and he spoke the views of a very powerful minority of the Commons. In the other House a Protest was carefully drawn with the purpose of defying and insulting what was then the unanimous opinion of Americans. It was signed by a body of lay peers, respectable at any rate in numbers, and by five bishops, who wrote their names between those of Sandwich and Weymouth like men so sure of their cause that there was no need to be nice about their company. Warburton of Gloucester, the ablest and by far the most distinguished among them, has left on record his own view of the duty of a father of the Church when dealing with affairs of State; and the theory which satisfied him was good enough for his brethren. "Let us private men," he wrote, when already a bishop, "preserve and improve the little we have left of private virtue; and, if one of those infected with the influenza of politics should ask me, 'What then becomes of your public virtue?' I would answer him with an old Spanish proverb: 'The King has enough for us all.'"

The King's idea of public virtue at this memorable conjuncture was notorious everywhere, and talked about freely by every one except by the Ministers, who, from the unfortunate obligations of their position, were bound to pretend to believe the Royal word. The course of action which alone could secure peace and welfare to his Empire had in him

an opponent more resolute and bitter even than Grenville. No Protest, phrased decorously enough to be admitted upon the Journals of the House of Lords, could have adequately expressed the sentiments of George the Third towards his subjects beyond the water. On their account the dislike which he had all along entertained for his Ministers had deepened into busy and unscrupulous hostility. He looked upon the conciliation of America, which those Ministers had effected, as an act of inexpressible disloyalty to the Crown. He thwarted them by an intrigue which has acquired a shameful immortality from the literary ability of a statesman who suffered from it, and of historians who have recounted it. How, during the debates on the Stamp Act, the King, acting through the King's Friends, harassed and hampered the King's Ministers, is told by Burke in the "Thoughts on the Discontents," and by Macaulay in the second Essay on Chatham; and seldom or never did either of them write more pointedly and powerfully. The process is concisely described by Mr. Lecky, in the twelfth chapter of his History. "When the measure was first contemplated, two partisans of Bute came to the King, offering to resign their places, as they meant to oppose the repeal, but they were told that they might keep their places and vote as they pleased. The hint was taken, and the King's friends were among the most active, though not the most conspicuous, opponents of the Ministers."

When, in spite of his efforts, the work of pacification was accomplished, George the Third never forgave his wise and faithful servants for having saved him from himself. Determined to punish, he fell diligently to the task of finding an instrument; and he soon was able to place his hand on a noble weapon, which he used with remarkable skill in a very bad cause. The love of Britain for Pitt was not stronger than the aversion with which, in life, and after death, he was regarded by Britain's sovereign. But at this crisis the great Commoner was recommended to the Royal notice by the circumstance, which was unhappily notorious, that he looked coldly upon the men whom George the Third hated. As soon as the King was sure of Pitt, he got quit of Rockingham. Under cover of a name which has elevated and adorned the annals of our Parliament, was formed a bad and foolish administration which woefully misdirected our national policy. That tissue of scrapes and scandals which marked their conduct of home affairs belongs to a period when Chatham was no longer in office; but the most disastrous and gratuitous of their blunders abroad dates from the time when he still was nominally Prime Minister. On the second of June,

1767, a series of Resolutions were passed in Committee of Ways and Means, imposing duties upon a number of commodities admitted into the British colonies and plantations in America; and it was the seventeenth of these Resolutions which provided "That a duty of 3*d.* per pound-weight avoirdupois be laid upon all tea imported into the said colonies and plantations."

It is a measure of the greatness of Chatham that, citizen and subject as he was, his opinions and predilections, nay his very moods and prejudices, affected the general course of events as deeply as it has ever or anywhere been affected by the character of the most powerful monarchs who have had an absolute hold on the resources and policy of a State. Just as the history of Germany would have run in other channels if Frederic the Great had not been King of Prussia at the death of the Emperor Charles the Sixth; just as Spain would have been spared untold calamities if any one but Napoleon had been on the throne of France when Ferdinand quarrelled with his father; so the fortunes of the English-speaking world would have looked very different in the retrospect if only Chatham had been in the mind to act cordially with the right men at the right moment. With Rockingham as his second in command,—with Lord John Cavendish, or Dowdeswell, or, still better, with Burke as his Chancellor of the Exchequer,—he might have lingered in the retirement to which his shattered health inclined him without detriment to the public interest or to his own fame. But with Grafton dispensing the patronage, and holding Cabinets in his absence, and with Charles Townshend master of the revels in the House of Commons, the step was taken, and taken in the name of Chatham, which in one day reversed the policy that he had nearest at heart, and undid the work of which he was most justly proud. The Boston massacre; the horrors of the Indian warfare; the mutual cruelties of partisans in the Carolinas; Saratoga and Yorktown; the French war; the Spanish war; the wholesale ruin of the American loyalists; the animosity towards Great Britain which for so long afterwards coloured the foreign policy of the United States;—all flowed in direct and inevitable sequence from that fatal escapade. Among the bright possibilities of history, very few can be entertained with better show of reason than a belief that the two nations might have kept house together with comfort, and in the end might have parted friends, if the statesman whom both of them equally revered and trusted would have thrown in his lot with that English party which, almost to a man, shared his wise



views in regard to the treatment of our colonies, and sympathised with the love which he bore their people.

The first cardinal mistake had now been made, and the next was not long in coming. British politicians had much else to talk of; and the hardworking, quiet-living British people, after the Stamp Act was repealed, had returned to their business, and put America out of their thoughts, as they supposed, for ever. They were not prepared for the instant and bewildering sensation which the news of what had been done at Westminster produced across the ocean. For the colonists, one and all, irrespective of class, creed, and calling, it was indeed a rude awakening. In the assurance that past scores were now wiped out, they had settled themselves down to the sober enjoyment of a victory which seemed the more secure because all concerned had their part in it; for if America had carried her point, England had conquered herself. And now, without warning, without fresh reason given, the question was reopened by the stronger of the two parties under circumstances which to the weaker portended ruin. The situation was far more ominous than if the Stamp-duty had been left where it was. Parliament, by repealing the Act, had publicly recognised and admitted that the claim to tax America was one to which America would never submit; and now, a twelvemonth afterwards, that claim was revived on a larger scale, and with a deliberation which showed that this time England meant business. It was impossible for the colonists,—who were all, in a sort, politicians, one as much as another,—to understand that the great mass of Englishmen attended seldom and little to a matter which for themselves was everything; which had exclusively occupied their minds and consumed their energies during six and thirty busy and anxious months; and which, almost against their will, had taught them to feel as a nation, to meet in general council, and to plan combined action.

But if America did not take sufficient account of the indifference and ignorance of England as a whole, her instinct told her, and told her rightly, that great men behind the scenes, before they raised the standard of British supremacy, had counted the cost, and were now fighting to win. Awed by the suddenness and magnitude of the peril, the colonial leaders acted with circumspection and rare self-control. Abstaining themselves, and with notable success restraining their followers, from the more violent courses which had marked the campaign against the Stamp Act, they undertook the task of appealing to the good sense and

the friendliness of the British people. John Dickinson of Pennsylvania, so true to England that he lost all heart for politics when the time came that he could no longer be true to England without being disloyal to America, put the case against the Revenue Acts with conclusive force, and in attractive shape. His "Farmer's Letters" having done their work at home, were published by Franklin in London, were translated into French, and were read by everybody in the two capitals of civilisation who read anything more serious than a play-bill. The members of the Massachusetts Assembly resolutely and soberly assumed the responsibility of giving an official voice to the grievances of America. They explained their contention in a letter which their agent in England was directed to lay before the British Cabinet; and they transmitted a Petition to the King, recounting the early struggles of their colony, its services to the Empire, the rights and privileges with which it had been rewarded, and its recent intolerable wrongs. The language used was manly, simple, and even touching, if anything could have touched him whom they still tried to regard as the father of his people. The documents were written in draft by Samuel Adams; and one of them, at least, was revised no less than seven times in full conclave with the object of excluding any harsh or intemperate expression. And then they prepared themselves for the very worst; because, though they fain would hope against hope, they only too well knew that the worst would come. They addressed a circular letter to the other representative Assemblies on the American continent, urging them to take such steps, within the limits of the Constitution, as would strengthen the hands of a sister colony which had done its duty, according to its light, in the presence of a great emergency, and which now ventured freely to make known its mind to them upon a common concern.

It was all to no purpose. Their Petition was thrown aside unanswered, much as if they had been a meeting of heritors in Scotland who had passed a resolution calling for the repeal of the Act of Union during the hours which ought to have been spent on parish business. But as regards the circular letter, even that parallel could not hold; for no Minister would have treated the humblest local body in any of the three Kingdoms in the style which the Secretary of State employed in dealing with the senates of America. Lord Hillsborough informed the Governor of Massachusetts that her representatives must rescind the resolution on which the circular letter was based, or be sent back to their homes then and there. The Assemblies of the twelve other colonies were enjoined, in so many words, to take no notice of the appeal from



Boston, and to treat it with the contempt which it deserved, on pain, in their case likewise, of an immediate prorogation or dissolution. Such a message could bring only one answer from men who had our blood in their veins, and in whose village schools our history was taught as their own. Junius, no blind partisan of the Americans, wrote of them with force and truth. "They have been driven into excesses little short of rebellion. Petitions have been hindered from reaching the Throne; and the continuance of one of the principal Assemblies rested upon an arbitrary condition, which, considering the temper they were in, it was impossible they should comply with." At Boston, in the fullest House that had ever met, ninety-two members, as against seventeen, flatly declined to withdraw the letter. The Assemblies of the other colonies stood stoutly by their fugleman, and faced, and in some cases paid, the threatened penalty.

In one city and another, from New York to Charleston, the language which had been familiar under the Stamp Act again was heard. The Sons of Liberty began to stir. The glorious majority was celebrated by processions with ninety-two torches, and banquets with an almost interminable list of toasts. Above all, a combination against the use of British manufactures once more was openly talked of; and the young ladies looked out their spinning-wheels, and the young gentlemen reflected ruefully that the weather was already warm for home-made linsey-woolsey. Boston itself, all things considered, was tranquil almost to tameness, in spite of sore provocation. But it fell about that the captain of a frigate, which mounted guard over the town, had taken advantage of his station at the mouth of the harbour to intercept and impress New England sailors as they returned home from sea. During the height of his unpopularity a boat's-crew from his ship, on an alleged breach of the revenue laws, seized a sloop which, to make the matter worse, was owned by a prominent patriot, and was called "The Liberty." A disturbance ensued far less serious than the magistrates of Sunderland and Hartlepool, and every North of England port which possessed a custom-house and was visited by a pressgang, in those rough times were accustomed to deal with as part of the year's work. But the English Ministers were sore and nervous. The mildest whisper of a non-importation agreement, and the most distant echo of a revenue riot, so long as they came from beyond the Western waters, awoke reminiscences which were too much for their temper and their equanimity. The King, especially, had Boston on the brain. To this day there are some among her sons who can forgive his memory for any-

thing rather than for the singular light in which he persisted in regarding their classic city. To his eyes the capital of Massachusetts was a centre of vulgar sedition, bristling with Trees of Liberty and strewn with brickbats and broken glass; where his enemies went about clothed in homespun, and his friends in tar and feathers.

Whatever his view might be, George the Third was now well able to impose it on the Ministry. Chatham had retired, and the Duke of Grafton, who was not master of his colleagues, held the office of First Lord of the Treasury. The Bedfords by this time had contrived to establish themselves solidly in the Government, and were always at hand to feed the flame of the King's displeasure. They eagerly represented to him that his authority had been trifled with long enough, and promised that five or six frigates and one strong brigade would soon bring not only Massachusettes, but the whole American continent, to reason. Lord Shelburne, to his infinite credit, fought the battle of sense and humanity singlehanded within the Cabinet, and stoutly declared that he would be no party to despatching for service on the coast of New England a cutter or a company in addition to the force that was there already. Franklin, whom Shelburne admired and believed in, had reminded the House of Commons that a regiment of infantry could not oblige a man to take stamps, or drink tea, if he chose to do without; and had expressed it as his opinion that, if troops were sent to America, they would not find a rebellion, although they would be only too likely to make one.<sup>2</sup> But Franklin's wit had too much wisdom in it for George the Third, and for such of his counsellors as knew what advice was expected of them. The Bedfords carried the day, and Shelburne resigned office. Early in October, 1768, eight ships of war lay in Boston harbour. Their loaded broadsides commanded a line of wharves a great deal more tranquil than was the quay of North Shields during one of the periodical disputes between the keelmen and the coal-shippers. Cannon and infantry were landed, and the men were marched on to the Common with drums beating and colours flying, and sixteen rounds of ball-cartridge in their pouches. The first contingent consisted of two battalions, and the wing of another; and subsequent reinforcements increased the garrison until Boston contained at least one red-coat for every five of the men, women, and children who made up the total of her seventeen thousand inhabitants.

<sup>2</sup> Examination of Dr. Benjamin Franklin before the House in Committee. *The Parliamentary History of England*, vol. xiv., p. 147.

So the second stage was reached in the downward course. How serious a step it was, how absolutely irretrievable except on the condition of being retracted forthwith, is now a commonplace of history. But its gravity was acknowledged at the time by few Englishmen and those who were specially responsible for the conduct of affairs were blind amidst the one-eyed. It is not too much to say that, among our own people of every degree, the governing classes understood America the least. One cause of ignorance they had in common with others of their countrymen. We understand the Massachusetts of 1768 better than it was understood by most Englishmen who wrote that date at the head of their letters. For when the question is that of getting to know what the world outside Europe was like four generations ago, distance of time is less of an obstacle to us, in an age when all read, than was distance of space to our ancestors before the days of steam and telegraph. A man bound for New York, as he sent his luggage on board at Bristol, would willingly have compounded for a voyage lasting as many weeks as it now lasts days. When Franklin, still a youth, went to London to buy the press and types by which he hoped to found his fortune, he had to wait the best part of a twelvemonth for the one ship which then made an annual trip between Philadelphia and the Thames. When, in 1762, already a great man, he sailed for England in a convoy of merchantmen, he spent all September and October at sea, enjoying the calm weather, as he always enjoyed everything; dining about on this vessel and the other; and travelling "as in a moving village, with all one's neighbours about one." Adams, during the height of the war, hurrying to France in the finest frigate which Congress could place at his disposal,—and with a captain who knew that, if he encountered a superior force, his distinguished guest did not intend to be carried alive under British hatches,—could make no better speed than five and forty days between Boston and Bordeaux. Lord Carlisle, carrying an olive-branch the prompt delivery of which seemed a matter of life and death to the Ministry that sent him out, was six weeks between port and port, tossed by gales which inflicted on his brother Commissioners agonies such as he forbore to make a matter of joke even to George Selwyn. General Riedesel, conducting the Brunswick troops to fight in a bad quarrel which was none of theirs, counted three mortal months from the day when he stepped on deck at Stade in the Elbe to the day when he stepped off it at Quebec in the St. Lawrence. If such was the lot of plenipotentiaries on mission and of generals in command, it may be imagined how humbler individuals fared, the



duration of whose voyage concerned no one but themselves. Waiting weeks on the wrong side of the water for a full complement of passengers, and weeks more for a fair wind;—and then beating across in a badly found tub, with a cargo of millstones and old iron rolling about below;—they thought themselves lucky if they came into harbour a month after their private stores had run out, and carrying a budget of news as stale as the ship's provisions.<sup>3</sup>

Whatever else got across the Atlantic under such conditions, fresh and accurate knowledge of what people on the opposite coast thought, and how they lived, most assuredly did not. War is a great teacher of geography. The ideas about men, laws, and localities in the United States, which were current here until Lee's Virginian campaigns and Sherman's March to Savannah, the Proclamation of Freedom, and the re-election of Lincoln, came successively to enlighten us, were vague and distorted even in an era of ocean steamers. But those ideas were tame and true as compared to the images which floated across the mental vision of our grandfather's grandfather whenever he took the trouble to think about the colonies. The hallucinations of the British mind, practical even in its fantasies, assumed the shape of fabulous statistics which went to show that America, unless her commercial ambition was kept tight in hand, would upset the intentions of Providence by ceasing to supply her wants exclusively from Britain. "The great defect here," Franklin wrote from London, "is in all sorts of people a want of attention to what passes in such remote countries as America; an unwillingness to read anything about them if it appears a little lengthy, and a disposition to postpone the consideration even of the things they know they must at last consider, so that they may have time for what more immediately concerns them, and withal enjoy their amusements, and be undisturbed in the universal dissipation."<sup>4</sup> They read as little as they could help and, when they did read, they were informed by the debates in Parliament that the farmers and backwoodsmen of the West, if they were permitted to manufacture in iron, in cotton, and in wool, and to export the produce of their labour all the world over, would speedily kill the industries of Leeds and Manchester and Sheffield. And they learned from the newspapers, for whom Niagara and the Rapids did not exist, that the interests of Newfoundland

<sup>3</sup> Among accounts of such voyages, none are more life-like than those which may be found in Davis's *Travels in America*, published in 1803; an exquisitely absurd book, which the world to the diminution of its gaiety has forgotten.

<sup>4</sup> Letter to Samuel Cooper. London, July 7, 1773.

were threatened by a scheme for the establishment of a cod and whale fishery in Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. That was the sort of stuff, said Franklin, which was produced for the amusement of coffee-house students in politics, and was the material for "all future Livys, Rapins, Robertsons, Humes, and Macaulays who may be inclined to furnish the world with that *rara avis*, a true history."<sup>5</sup>

Over and above the misconceptions which prevailed in other quarters, Ministers of State were under a disadvantage peculiar to themselves. While other Englishmen were ignorant, they were habitually misinformed. In recent years the nation has more than once learned by bitter experience the evils which arise from bad advice sent home by administrators on the spot, whether they be dull people who cannot interpret what is passing around them, or clever people with a high-flying policy of their own. But the Colonial Governors and High Commissioners of our own times have been men of good, and sometimes of lofty, character; whereas the personages upon whose reports Lord Hillsborough and Lord Dartmouth had to depend for forming their notions of the American population, and in accordance with whose suggestions the course taken at an emergency by the British Cabinet was necessarily shaped, were in many cases utterly unworthy of their trust. Among them were needy politicians and broken stockjobbers who in better days had done a good turn to a Minister, and for whom a post had to be found at times when the English public departments were too full, or England itself was too hot, to hold them. There remained the resource of shipping them across the Atlantic to chaffer for an increase of salary with the assembly of their colony, and to pester their friends at home with claims for a pension which would enable them to revisit London without fear of the Marshalsea. They took small account socially of the plain and shrewd people amongst whom their temporary lot was thrown; and they were the last to understand the nature and motives of that moral repugnance with which their superciliousness was repaid.

On the Secretary of State's list there were better men than these, who unfortunately were even worse governors. It so happened that in critical places, and at moments which were turning-points of history, the highest post in the colony was more often than not occupied by some man

<sup>5</sup> Letter of May, 1765, to the editor of a newspaper, under the signature of "A Traveller." Mrs. Catharine Macaulay, author of *The History of England from the Accession of James the First to that of the Brunswick Line*, was then much in vogue among the Whigs. They were rather at a loss for an historian of their own, to set against the Jacobitism of David Hume.

of energy and industry, who in personal conduct was respectable according to the standard then ruling in the most easy branch of a public service nowhere given to austerity. But they were not of an intellectual capacity equal to a situation which would have tried the qualities of a Turgot. They moved in an atmosphere such that perverted public spirit was more dangerous than no public spirit at all. A great man would have sympathised with the aspirations of the colonists; a lazy man would have laughed at and disregarded them; but, (by a tendency which is irresistible in times of unrest and popular discontent,) a narrow and plodding man is the predestined enemy of those whom it is his vocation to govern. Exactly in proportion as people are keen to detect their rights, and formidable to insist on having them, a governor of this type is certain to distrust their aims, to disapprove their methods, and bitterly to dislike their turn of character. In his eyes, the rough and ready incidents that accompany the spread of political excitement in a young community are so many acts of treason against his office, which he is always apt to magnify. His self-respect is wounded; his sense of official tradition is honestly shocked; and, while the people are intent upon what they regard as a public controversy, he is sure to treat the whole matter as a personal conflict between himself and them.

Such a man, in such a state of mind and temper, makes it his duty, and finds it his consolation, to pour out his griefs and resentments in the correspondence which he carries on with his official superiors. It is the bare truth that his own Governors and Lieutenant-Governors wrote King George out of America. The stages of the process are minutely recorded by an analytic philosopher who enjoyed every facility for conducting his observations. "Their office," wrote Franklin, "makes them insolent; their insolence makes them odious; and, being conscious that they are hated, they become malicious. Their malice urges them to continual abuse of the inhabitants in their letters to administration, representing them as disaffected and rebellious, and, (to encourage the use of severity,) as weak, divided, timid, and cowardly. Government believes all; thinks it necessary to support and countenance its officers. Their quarrelling with the people is deemed a mark and consequence of their fidelity. They are therefore more highly rewarded, and this makes their conduct still more insolent and provoking."

It was a picture painted from life, in strong but faithful colours. The letters of Bernard, the Governor of Massachusetts, contained the germ

of all the culpable and foolish proceedings which at the long last alienated America. As far back as the year 1764 he wrote a memorandum in which he urged the Cabinet to quash the Charters of the colonies. Throughout the agitation against the Stamp-duty he studiously exaggerated the turbulence of the popular party, and underrated their courage and sincerity. "The people here," he wrote, in January, 1766, "talk very high of their power to resist Great Britain; but it is all talk. New York and Boston would both be defenceless to a royal fleet. I hope that New York will have the honour of being subdued first." When, to his chagrin, the obnoxious tax was abolished, Bernard set himself persistently to the work of again troubling the quieted waters. He proposed, in cold blood, during the interval between the repeal of the Stamp Act and the imposition of the Tea-duty, that Massachusetts should be deprived of her Assembly. When the new quarrel arose, he lost no chance of stimulating the fears of the Court, and flattering its prejudices. He sent over lists of royalists who might be nominated to sit as councillors in the place of the ejected representatives, and lists of patriots who should be deported to England, and there tried for their lives. He called on the Bedfords for troops as often and as importunately as ever the Bedfords themselves had called for trumps when a great stake was on the card-table. He advised that the judges and the civil servants of Massachusetts should be paid by the Crown with money levied from the colony. He pleaded in secret that the obnoxious taxes should never, and on no account, be repealed or mitigated; while in a public despatch he recommended that a petition from the Assembly, praying for relief from these very taxes, should be favourably considered. For this plot against the liberties of America was carried on out of the view of her people. Amidst the surprise and dismay inspired by each successive stroke of severity with which they were visited, the colonists did not recognise, and in some cases did not even suspect, the hand of their own paid servants, who were for ever professing to mediate between them and their angry sovereign. Since Machiavelli undertook to teach the Medici how principalities might be governed and maintained, no such body of literature was put on paper as that in which Sir Francis Bernard, (for his services procured him a baronetcy,) instructed George the Third and his Ministers in the art of throwing away a choice portion of a mighty Empire.

But in order to comprehend a policy which lay so far outside the known and ordinary limits of human infatuation, it must never be for-



gotten that there was a deeper and a more impassable gulf than the Atlantic between the colonists and their rulers. If Cabinet Ministers at home had known the Americans better, they would only have loved them less. The higher up in the peerage an Englishman stood, and the nearer to influence and power, the more unlikely it was that he would be in sympathy with his brethren across the seas, or that he would be capable of respecting their susceptibilities, and of apprehending their virtues, which were less to his taste even than their imperfections. It is unnecessary to recapitulate any portion of the copious mass of evidence, drawn from their own mouths, and those of their boon companions and confederates, by aid of which a description—and the accuracy of it no one has thought fit to impugn—has been given of the personal habits and the public morality prevalent among those statesmen whom the majority in Parliament supported, and in whom the King reposed his confidence.<sup>6</sup> How they drank and gamed; what scandalous modes of life they led themselves, and joyously condoned in others; what they spent and owed, and whence they drew the vast sums of money by which they fed their extravagance, may be found in a hundred histories and memoirs, dramas, novels, and satires. But the story is nowhere recorded in such downright language, and with so much exuberance of detail, as in the easy mutual confidences of the principal actors; if, indeed, that can be called a confidence which the person concerned would have told with equal freedom and self-complacency to any man,—and, it must be confessed, to many women,—as long as the hearers were of his own rank, and belonged to his own party.

These folk were the product of their age, which in its worst aspect, resembled nothing that England has known before or since. The stern heroes who waged the great civic contest of the seventeenth century, and who drew their strength from the highest of all sources, had been succeeded by a race who in private very generally lived for enjoyment, and in Parliament fought for their own hand. The fibre of our public men had long been growing dangerously lax, and at length temptation came in irresistible force. The sudden wealth which poured into England after Chatham had secured her predominance in both hemispheres brought in its train a flood of extravagance and corruption, and occasioned grave misgivings to those who were proud of her good name, and who understood her real interests. There was now, however, in store for our country a severe and searching lesson, the direct consequence of her faults, and proportioned to their magnitude, but by

<sup>6</sup> Chapter III. of the *Early History of Charles James Fox*.



which as a nation she was capable of profiting. She escaped the fate of other world-wide empires by the noble spirit in which she accepted the teaching of disaster. From the later years of the American war onwards there set in a steady and genuine reformation in personal and political morals which carried her safe, strong, and pure through the supreme ordeal of the wrestle with Napoleon.

But nothing is more certain than that there was a period when Englishmen who had studied the past, and who watched the present, recognised, most unwillingly, a close parallel between their own country and the capital of the ancient world at the time when the Provinces lay helpless and defenceless at the disposal of the Senate. They read their Gibbon with uneasy presentiments, and were not disposed to quarrel with satirists who found in London and Bath much the same material as Rome and Baia had afforded to Juvenal. Smollett, though by preference he drew from ugly models, depicted things as he saw them, and not as he imagined them. Those scenes of coarseness and debauchery, of place-hunting and bribery, of mean tyranny and vulgar favouritism, which make his town-stories little short of nauseous, and give to his sea-stories their unpleasing but unquestionable power, were only the seamy side of that tapestry on which more fashionable artists recorded the sparkling follies and splendid jobbery of their era. Great in describing the symptoms, Smollett had detected the root of the disease, as is shown in his description of the throng of visitors who came to drink the Bath waters. "All these absurdities," he wrote, "arise from the general tide of luxury, which hath overpowered the nation, and swept away all, even the dregs of the people. Clerks and factors from the East Indies, loaded with the spoils of plundered provinces; planters, negro-drivers, and hucksters from our American plantations, enriched they know not how; agents, commissaries, and contractors, who have fattened in two successive wars on the blood of the nation; usurers, brokers, and jobbers of every kind; men of low birth and no breeding, have found themselves suddenly translated to a state of affluence unknown to former ages."<sup>7</sup>

Other writers, who were not professional cynics, and who observed mankind with no inclination to make the worst of what they saw, were all in the same story. Horne Tooke pronounced that English manners had not changed by degrees, but of a sudden; and he attributed it chiefly to our connection with India that luxury and corruption had flowed in, "not as in Greece, like a gentle rivulet, but after the manner

<sup>7</sup> *Humphrey Clinker*. The letter from Bath of April 23.

of a torrent.”<sup>8</sup> On such a point no more unimpeachable witnesses can be found than those American Tories who sacrificed their homes, their careers, and their properties for love of England, and for the duty which they thought that they owed her. These honest men were shocked and pained to find that in passing from the colonies to the mother-country they had exchanged an atmosphere of hardihood, simplicity, and sobriety for what seemed to them a perpetual cyclone of prodigality and vice. Their earlier letters, before they had grown accustomed to a state of manners which they never could bring themselves to approve, breathe in every paragraph disappointment and disillusion.<sup>9</sup> The blemishes on the fair fame of England, which these unhappy children of her adoption discovered late in life, were familiar to her native sons from the time when they first began to take account of what was going on around them. Churchill’s denunciations of the rake, the gamester, and the duellist in high places of trust and power read to us now like the conventional invective of satire; but in his own generation they were true to the life and the letter. And Cowper, whose most halting verse had a dignity and sincerity which must ever be wanting to Churchill’s bouncing couplets, made it a complaint against his country

That she is rigid in denouncing death  
On petty robbers, and indulges life  
And liberty, and oft-times honour too,  
To speculators of the public gold:  
That thieves at home must hang, but he that puts  
Into his overgorged and bloated purse  
The wealth of Indian provinces, escapes.<sup>10</sup>

By whatever channels money flowed into the country, it was in the nature of things that those who were the strongest should get the most. The people of birth and fashion, who as a class were always in power,

<sup>8</sup> *Memoirs of John Horne Tooke*, vol. ii., p. 488.

<sup>9</sup> Samuel Curwen, for instance, who left Salem in Massachusetts for London in May, 1775, writes in July of the same year: “The dissipation, self-forgetfulness, and vicious indulgences of every kind which characterise this metropolis are not to be wondered at. The unbounded riches of many afford the means of every species of luxury, which, (thank God,) our part of America is ignorant of.” And again in the following August: “You will not wonder at the luxury, dissipation, and profligacy of manners said to reign in this capital, when you consider that the temptations to indulgence, from the lowest haunts to the most elegant and expensive rendezvous of the noble and polished world, are almost beyond the power of number to reckon up.”

<sup>10</sup> Book I. of *The Task*.

had no mind to be outbid and outshone by the nabobs, and army contractors, and West Indian planters who were pushing to the front in parliament and in society. In order to hold their own against the new men in wealth, and in all that wealth brings, they had one resource, and one only. The opinion of their set forbade them to engage in trade; and, apart from any question of sentiment, their self-indulgent habits unfitted them for the demands of a genuine business life, which were more severe then than now. The spurious business which a gentleman may do in his off hours with no commercial training, no capital, and no risk except to honour, was unknown in those primitive days. In the eighteenth century the City did not care to beg or to buy any man's name, unless he gave with it the whole of his time and the whole of his credit. But a great peer had small cause to regret that the gates of commerce were barred to him and his, as long as he could help himself out of the taxes, and help himself royally; for, in that paradise of privilege, what an individual received from the public was in proportion to the means which he possessed already. Horace Walpole, who lived very long and very well on sinecures which were waiting for him when he came of age, said that there was no living in England under twenty thousand a year. "Not that that suffices; but it enables one to ask for a pension for two or three lives."

A nobleman with a large supply of influence to sell, who watched the turn of the market, and struck in at the right moment, might make the fortune of his family in the course of a single week. "To-morrow," Rigby wrote to the Duke of Bedford in September, 1766, "Lord Hertford kisses hands for Master of the Horse. Lord Beauchamp is made Constable of Dublin Castle for life in the room of an old Mr. Hatton. Lord Hertford gives Mr. Hatton a thousand pounds to quit his employment, which was five hundred a year. A thousand more is added, and Lord Beauchamp has got it for his life. There is another job done for another son in a Custom-house place, which will be a thousand a year more. In short, what with sons and daughters, and boroughs, and employments of all kinds, I never heard of such a trading voyage as his Lordship's has proved." Rigby himself—whose stock-in-trade was an effrontery superior to the terrors of debate, a head of proof in a drinking bout, and an undeniable popularity with all circles whose goodwill was no compliment—was Master of the Rolls in Ireland, or rather out of Ireland, for life. In addition, he enjoyed for the space of fourteen years the vast and more than questionable emoluments of a Paymaster of the Forces who was without a conscience, and with a good

friend at the Treasury. A balance of eleven hundred thousand pounds of public money stood in his name at the bank, the interest on which went to him, or rather to his creditors; for he lived and died insolvent. To this day the nation has against him a bad debt of a large amount, in the sense, that is, in which a traveller whose purse has been taken has a bad debt against a highwayman.

The increasing luxury and the rise in the standard of living, which drove great men into these raids on the Exchequer, at the same time provided the means of gratifying, if not of satisfying, their rapacity. New offices were created out of the superfluities of the revenue; and, as each year went round, those which already existed became better worth having. The receipts of the Customs and the Excise together under Lord North were double what they had been under Sir Robert Walpole. The profits of patent places, which were received in fees or in percentages, mounted steadily upwards as the business which passed through the hands of the holder, or of his humble and poorly paid subordinates, grew in importance and in volume. The Usher of the Exchequer saw his gains, in the course of one generation, grow from nine hundred to eighteen hundred, and from eighteen hundred to four thousand two hundred pounds a year. The spread of commerce, the rush of enterprise, brought causes into the Courts, and private Bills on to the table of Parliament, in numbers such that many a post, which twenty years before had been regarded as a moderate competence for life, now enabled its occupier to entertain the ambition of founding a family out of the tribute which he levied from litigants and promoters.

The domestic history of the epoch clearly shows that every noble, and even gentle, household in the kingdom claimed as the birthright of its members that they should live by salary. The eldest son succeeded to the estate, the most valuable part of which, more productive than a coal-mine or a slate-quarry, was some dirty village which returned a member for each half-score of its twenty cottages. The second son was in the Guards. The third took a family living, and looked forward to holding at least a Canonry as well. The fourth entered the Royal Navy; and those that came after, (for fathers of all ranks did their duty by the State, whose need of men was then at the greatest,) joined a marching regiment as soon as they were strong enough to carry the colours. And as soldiers and sailors, whatever might be the case in other departments, our ancestors gave full value for their wages. From the day when Rodney broke the line off Dominica, back to the day when de Grammont did not break the line at Dettingen, a commission in the



British army or navy was no sinecure. Our aristocracy took the lion's share, but they played the lion's part. The sons and grandsons of the houses of Manners and Keppel did not do their work in the field and on the quarter-deck by proxy. Killed in Germany, killed in America, killed in the Carnatic with Laurence, killed on the high seas in an action of frigates, drowned in a transport, died of wounds on his way home from the West Indies,—such entries, coming thick and fast over a period of forty years, during which we were fighting for five and twenty, make the baldest record of our great families a true roll of honour.

Whether they lived on their country or died for her, the members of our ruling class were an aristocracy; State-paid, as far as they earned money at all; seldom entering the open professions; and still further removed from the homely and laborious occupations on which the existence of society is founded. But they governed the Empire, and, among other parts of the Empire, those great provinces in North America which were inhabited by a race of men with whom, except their blood and language, they had little in common. Burke, who told the House of Commons that he had taken for some years a good deal of pains to inform himself on the matter, put the white population in the colonies at not less than two millions, which was something between a fourth and a fifth of the population of Great Britain. The outposts of that army of pioneers were doing battle with the wilderness along an ever-advancing frontier of eighteen hundred miles from end to end. In the Southern States, where life was cruelly rough for the poorer settlers, and where the more wealthy landowners depended on the labour of negroes, society was already constituted after a fashion which differed from anything that was to be seen in New England, or in Old England either. But the great majority of the colonists were gathered together, though not very near together, in settled districts, with a civilisation and a type of character of their own such as the world had never before witnessed.

The French nobles, who brought their swords and fortunes to the assistance of the Revolution in America, opened their eyes on the morning after their arrival upon a state of things which closely resembled the romantic ideal then fashionable in Parisian circles. But for a certain toughness and roughness, of undoubted English origin, which the young fellows began to notice more when they had learned to speak English better, the community in which they found themselves seemed,

in their lively and hopeful eyes, to have been made to order out of the imagination of Rousseau or of Fénelon. They were equally delighted with the external aspect and the interior meaning of the things around them. The Comte de Ségur had seen peasants at the opera; before he wrote his *Memoirs* he had lived to see the extemporised villages which the loyalty and gallantry of Prince Potemkin constructed and decorated at each stage of the Empress Catherine's famous voyage through her Southern dominions; but in his long and chequered existence he met with nothing which so pleased him as what he espied along the high roads of Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. "Sometimes," he wrote, "in the midst of vast forests, with majestic trees which the axe had never touched, I was transported in idea to the remote times when the first navigators set their feet on that unknown hemisphere. Sometimes I was admiring a lovely valley, carefully tilled, with the meadows full of cattle; the houses clean, elegant, painted in bright and varied colours, and standing in little gardens behind pretty fences. And then, further on, after other masses of woods, I came to populous hamlets, and towns where everything betokened the perfection of civilisation,—schools, churches, universities. Indigence and vulgarity nowhere; abundance, comfort, and urbanity everywhere. The inhabitants, each and all, exhibited the unassuming and quiet pride of men who have no master, who see nothing above them except the law, and who are free from the vanity, the servility, and the prejudices of our European societies. That is the picture which, throughout my whole journey, never ceased to interest and surprise me."

It is a scene depicted by a foreigner and an enthusiast, who had no mind to observe faults. But de Ségur and his comrades, though they were young when they visited America, recorded or reprinted their impressions of it after an experience of men and cities such as falls to the lot of few. Lafayette, whatever might be the misfortunes of his middle life, had sooner or later seen a great deal of the world under the pleasant guise which it presents to the hero of a perpetual ovation. Matthieu Dumas, who, before he was Lieutenant-General of the armies of King Louis the Eighteenth, served Napoleon long and faithfully, had marched, and fought, and administered all Europe over in the train of the most ubiquitous of conquerors. And yet, after so much had been tried and tasted, the remote and ever-receding picture of their earliest campaign stood out as their favourite page in the book of memory. They liked the country, and they never ceased to love the people. They could not forget how, in "one of those towns which were soon to be

cities, or villages which already were little towns," they would alight from horseback in a street bright with flowers and foliage. They would lift the knocker of shining brass which pleased eyes accustomed at home to the shabbiness and misery of most houses below the rank of a palace guarded by a gigantic Swiss porter, whose duty it was to usher in the high-born and suppress the humble visitor. Behind the door, gay with paint which never was allowed to lose its gloss, they were sure to meet with a hospitality that knew no respect of persons. "Simplicity of manners," said Lafayette, "the desire to oblige, and a mild and quiet equality are the rule everywhere. The inns are very different from those of Europe. The master and mistress sit down with you, and do the honours of an excellent dinner; and, when you depart, there is no bargaining over the bill. If you are not in the mind to go to a tavern, you can soon find a country-house where it is enough to be a good American in order to be entertained as in Europe we entertain a friend."

Those were not the manners of Europe, and it is to be feared that to a special degree they were not then the manners of Great Britain. The wife of General Riedesel passed across our island on her way to rejoin her husband in Canada, and share his dangers in the field. In London she was exposed to every form of molestation, from curiosity to gross incivility, on the part of the idlers and loungers. It was enough for them that she was foreign; and they did not trouble themselves to ask whether or not she was connected with a foreigner who had left his country in order to fight their country's battles. At Bristol she went out walking under the escort of the Mayor's niece, in a favourite dress which she had brought with her from Germany. A mob of more than a hundred sailors gathered round, pointing at her with their fingers, and shouting to her an epithet which is the most cruel insult that can be offered to a woman. The poor lady was so horrified that, though she could ill afford the loss, she gave her gown away.

Nor, on the point of international hospitality, was there much to choose between town and country. Herr Moritz of Berlin, who ventured on a walking tour up the valley of the Thames towards the close of the American war, found that a clergyman and man of letters, presumed by the public to go afoot because he could not afford to ride, must still expect as scurvy entertainment as in the days of Joseph Andrews. This gentleman in the course of his first stage between London and Oxford complained that, when he rested in the shade by the road-side with a book in his hand, he excited in the passers-by a



sort of contemptuous pity, which women expressed by the exclamation of "Good God Almighty!" and men by something stronger. In Windsor he was turned away from the door of one inn, and sworn at to his face at another. At the taverns along the Henley road he was denied a lodging, and did not dare even to ask for one in the town itself. The village of Nuneham refused him a bed, a supper, and even a crust of bread with his ale. When he penetrated further into the heart of the country, he was hissed through the streets of Burton, where he had hoped to stay the night; and at Matlock he was most churlishly treated because, from ignorance of English customs, he omitted to drink the health of the company. "They showed me into the kitchen," he says on another occasion, "and set me down to sup at the same table with some soldiers and the servants. I now, for the first time, found myself in one of those kitchens which I had so often read of in Fielding's fine novels, and which certainly give one, on the whole, a very accurate idea of English manners. While I was eating, a postchaise drove up, and in a moment the whole house was set in motion, in order to receive, with all due respect, guests who were supposed to be persons of consequence. The gentlemen, however, called for nothing but a couple of pots of beer, and then drove away again. The people of the house behaved to them with all possible attention, because they came in a postchaise." Herr Moritz everywhere was struck by the different welcome vouchsafed to those whom the innkeepers styled "Sir," and those who, like himself and humbler people, were addressed as "Master."

Mathieu Dumas saw the difference between English and American manners. "In spite," he says, "of the resemblance in language, in costume, in customs, in religion, and in the principles of government, a distinct national character is forming itself. The colonists are milder and more tolerant, more hospitable, and in general more communicative than the English. The English, in their turn, reproach them with levity and too keen a taste for pleasure." But the contrast was not with England alone among European nations; and the cause lay deep in the favourable conditions of life which prevailed in the New World, and were wanting to the Old. "An observer," wrote de Ségur, "fresh from our magnificent cities, and the airs of our young men of fashion,—who has compared the luxury of our upper classes with the coarse dress of our peasants, and the rags of our innumerable poor,—is surprised, on reaching the United States, by the entire absence of the extremes both of opulence and misery. All Americans whom we met wore

clothes of good material. Their free, frank, and familiar address, equally removed from uncouth discourtesy and from artificial politeness, betokened men who were proud of their own rights and respected those of others."

On a question of manners there is no appeal from the judgment of people who came from the very centre of that combination of culture and talent with rank and breeding which marked French society in the age preceding the Revolution. Lafayette had been a Black Musketeer while still a schoolboy, and had refused a post in a royal household when he married at what was then, for a scion of the French nobility, the mature age of sixteen. But his independence was not to his disadvantage, and the world of fashion made all the more of him on account of the flavour of elegant republicanism which hung about him. De Ségur, when in garrison, served in a regiment containing such sub-lieutenants as the Prince de Lambesc, Master of the Horse of France, and the son of the Duc de Fleury, who was the First Gentleman of the Chamber. In Paris he had been honoured by the intimacy of Marmontel and d'Alembert. And yet Lafayette and de Ségur joined in testifying that they never met truer gentlemen than their hosts in the New England villages, and than their brethren in arms who sat round the frugal table of General Washington.

The character which they admired was home-grown, but it bore transportation well. The American qualities of that plain and strong generation did not require American surroundings to set them off to advantage. John Adams began life as a rural schoolmaster, and continued it as a rural lawyer. He never saw anything which Lord Chesterfield or Madame du Deffand would have recognised as society, until he dined with Turgot to meet a member of the family of de Rochefoucauld. He learned French as he went along, and at the bottom of his heart had no great love or respect for Frenchmen. But soon after he began his sojourn in France, he became at home in the diplomatic world; and before long he had acquired there a commanding influence, which proved to be of inestimable value to his country. Franklin in London had no official position except that of agent for a colonial Assembly, and no previous knowledge of English society except what he had picked up as a youth, working for a printer, and lodging in Little Britain at three and sixpence a week. And yet he was welcomed by all, of every rank, whom he cared to meet, and by some great people with whose attentions, and with a good deal of whose wine, he would

have willingly dispensed.<sup>11</sup> When he took up his abode in Paris, he continued to live as he had lived in Philadelphia till the age of seventy, —talking his usual talk, and dressed in sober broadcloth. And yet he became the rage, and set the fashion, in circles which gave undisputed law to the whole of polite Europe in matters where taste and behaviour were concerned.

Successes of this nature, however remarkable, may, in the case of Franklin and Adams, be partly accounted for by reasons which hold good in all times and in all companies. The hero, as Emerson says, is suffered to be himself; and society does not insist on his conforming to the usages which it imposes on the rank and file of its members. But the honest people who gave a bed and a supper to the young French colonel at every stopping place between Delaware Bay and West Point were not all of them heroes or sages; and the agreeable impression which they produced upon their foreign guests must be explained by other causes. The fact is that travellers from the countries of continental Europe found in America exactly what they had been searching after eagerly, and with some sense of disappointment, in England. Anglomania was then at its height; and the noblest form of that passion led men to look for, and imitate, the mode of life which must surely, (so they hoped and argued,) be the product of such laws and such freedom as ours. Of simplicity and frugality, of manliness and independence, of religious conviction and sense of duty, there was abundance in our island, if they had known where to seek it. In every commercial town from Aberdeen to Falmouth, and on many a countryside, the day's work was being done by men of the right stamp, with something of old manners, but of solid modern knowledge; close attendants at church, or, in more cases still, at chapel; writing without effort and pretension a singularly clear and vigorous English, and making the money which they spent, and a good deal more, by their own labour and their own enterprise. From them came Howard and Raikes, Arkwright and Wedgwood, Watt and Brindley. For them Wesley and John Newton preached, and Adam Smith and Arthur Young wrote. Intent on their business, they yet had time to spare

<sup>11</sup> "We have lost Lord Clare from the Board of Trade," Franklin wrote in July, 1768. "He took me home from Court the Sunday before his removal, that I might dine with him, as he said, alone, and talk over American affairs. He gave me a great deal of flummery; saying that, though at my Examination I answered some of his questions a little pertly, yet he liked me for the spirit I showed in defence of my country. At parting, after we had drunk a bottle and a half of claret each, he hugged and kissed me, protesting that he had never in his life met with a man he was so much in love with."



for schemes of benevolence and general utility; and they watched the conduct of State affairs with deep and growing interest, and with indignation which was mostly silent. For their opportunity was not yet; and they were creating and maturing quietly, and as it were unconsciously, that public opinion of their class which grew in strength during the coming fifty years, and then for another fifty years was destined to rule the country. They were the salt of the earth in those days of corruption; but they were not the people whom a gentleman from Versailles, visiting London with letters of introduction from the Duc de Choiseul or the Chevalier de Boufflers, would be very likely to meet. They lived apart from high society, and did not copy its habits or try to catch its tone; nor did they profess the theory of an equality which, as their strong sense told them, they could not successfully assert in practice. Preserving their self-respect, and keeping within their own borders, they recognised that the best of the world, whether they liked it or not, was made for others. However little they might care to put the confession into words, they acted, and wrote, and spoke as men aware that the government of their nation was in the hands of an aristocracy to which they themselves did not belong.

It was far otherwise in America. The people in the settled districts had emerged from a condition of cruel hardship to comfort, security, and as much leisure as their temperament, already the same as now, would permit them to take. Their predecessors had fought and won their battle against hunger and cold and pestilence, against savage beasts and savage men. As time went on, they had confronted and baffled a subtler and more deadly adversary in the power of the later Stuarts. As soon as the exiles had conquered from the wilderness a country which was worth possessing, the statesmen of the Restoration stepped in to destroy their liberties, to appropriate their substance, and to impose on them the form of Church government to escape from which they had crossed the ocean. Those varied and protracted struggles had left a mark in the virile and resolute temper of the existing generation, in their readiness to turn a hand to any sort of work on however sudden an emergency, and in their plain and unpretentious habits. But there was nothing uncivilised or unlettered about them. In their most bitter straits, while the existence of the community was still at hazard, the founders of the colony had taken measures for securing those supreme benefits to the individual which in their eyes were the true end and object of all combined human effort. By the time they had reaped their fifth harvest on the shores of the Massachusetts Bay,

they had established a public school at Cambridge; and the next year it was raised to the dignity of a college, with a library and something of an endowment. Again a twelvemonth, and the first sheet was drawn from beneath a New England printing-press; and eight years later on, in 1647, it was ordered that every township, "after the Lord hath increased them to the number of fifty householders, shall appoint one within their towns to teach all such children as shall resort to him to write and read; and where any town shall increase to the number of one hundred families, they shall set up a grammar school, the masters thereof being able to instruct youth so far as they may be fitted for the university."

Not otherwise did the Scottish statesmen of 1696 read their duty, with great results to the future of their people, ancient and immovable as were the limits by which that future was circumscribed and confined. But the lawgivers of the Puritan colonies had a blank parchment before them, and they were equal to the task of ruling the lines along which the national character was to run. The full fruit of their work was seen four generations afterwards in the noble equality of universal industry, and of mutual respect, which prevailed among a population of whom none were idle and none were ignorant. "There," wrote de Ségur, "no useful profession is the subject of ridicule or contempt. Idleness alone is a disgrace. Military rank and public employment do not prevent a person from having a calling of his own. Every one there is a tradesman, a farmer, or an artisan. Those who are less well off,—the servants, labourers, and sailors,—unlike men of the lower classes in Europe, are treated with a consideration which they merit by the propriety of their conduct and their behaviour. At first I was surprised, on entering a tavern, to find it kept by a captain, a major, or a colonel, who was equally ready to talk, and to talk well, about his campaigns, his farming operations, or the market he had got for his produce or his wares. And I was still more taken aback when—after I had answered the questions put to me about my family, and had informed the company that my father was a General and a Minister of State—they went on to inquire what was his profession or his business."

There could be no personal sympathy, and no identity of public views, between the governors in Downing Street and the governed in Pennsylvania and New England. On the one hand was a commonwealth containing no class to which a man was bound to look up, and none on which he was tempted to look down, where there was no source of dignity except labour, and no luxury but a plenty which was

shared by all. On the other hand was a ruling caste, each member of which, unless by some rare good fortune, was taught by precept and example, from his schooldays onwards, that the greatest good was to live for show and pleasure; that the whole duty of senatorial man was to draw as much salary as could be got in return for as little work as might be given for it; and that socially and politically the many were not to be reckoned as standing on a level with the few. The muniment-rooms of our old families are rich in curious notices of the educational conditions under which British statesmen of that day formed their earliest ideas of the social relations that ought to exist between man and man. Among them is a story dating from the time when the memory of Charles Fox was still fresh at Eton. One George Harlow, in January, 1779, thus wrote from the Queen's Palace to Sir Michael de Fleming.

"Give me leave to call to your remembrance an adventure which happened about 13 or 14 years ago at Windsor. Myself and a friend went from Richmond lodge to Windsor to see the Castle. We dined at the Swan Inn, and looking out of the window we saw a number of Eton scholars coming over the bridge, and, as they passed the window, you, Sir Michael, was pleased peremptory to demand my name, and I not being acquainted with the manners of Eton scholars, and likewise stranger to your quality, refused to satisfy your curiosity, on which you and I believe a score of your schoolfellows jumped in at the window, and threatened destruction to us, if we did not resolve you. My friend told you his name, but before I had time to reflect you took up my whip, and with the butt end of it levelled a blow at my head, the marks of which I now carry, which stunned me for some minutes. When I recovered you was standing before me, and told me I was not hurt but that I bled damnably. However you obliged me to tell my name, which done you swore I was a good fellow, and offered me any recompense for my broken head, and said you was sorry for what had happened. I was lately telling this story to a friend who advised me to make myself known, not doubting but you would use your interest to remove me to a place of less confinement than I have at present in his Majesty's household. If I should be so happy as to meet your favour, and succeed, I shall for ever remember you and the adventure at Windsor with pleasure, and consider my scar as the promoter of my happiness."

At the period to which the above story refers the great public school of England was passing through a singular phase of its history. The



stern and often cruel education of the seventeenth century was obsolete, and had been succeeded by a laxity of manners to which the finishing touch was put by Lord Holland. In the course of a tour on the Continent, Charles Fox had been inducted by his father into the practice of pleasant vices; and, on their return to England, he went back to Eton with unlimited money, and the tastes of a rake and a gambler. Nature had endowed the boy with qualities which dazzled and bewitched his comrades, and excused him in the eyes of his superiors. His influence in the school was unbounded. Lord Shelburne gave it as his opinion that the great change for the worse which had taken place among the youth of the upper classes dated from the time that the Foxes were predominant at Eton. It was the exaggerated statement of one who was no friend to the family; for it left out of sight the consideration that, bad as Lord Holland's conduct was, others than he were responsible for the morality of the school. Charles Fox would have followed a better path if it had been pointed out by instructors whom he loved and revered. And, at the very worst, a few private interviews with a strong-willed and stout-armed headmaster should have convinced the most precocious scapegrace that Eton was not Spa or Paris.

But discipline, in any true sense of the word, there was none. Clever boys learned to write Latin, as it was learned nowhere else. That, to the end of his days, was the persuasion of Charles Fox; and his own productions go to prove it, even in the judgment of those whose allegiance is due to other nurseries of classical culture. His school exercises, both in prose and metre, are marked by a facility of handling, and a sense of personal enjoyment on the part of the writer, which are not always perceptible in the exquisite imitations of Greek and Roman poets composed by the scholars of a later time. Nor did Latin verse comprise all that was to be learned at Eton. The authorities were provident enough to teach elocution to lads not a few of whom inherited, as part of their patrimony, the right of sitting for a borough, or the obligation of standing for a county. But there the duty of a teacher towards his pupils, as he himself read it, ended. The boys feared the masters less than the masters feared the boys, and with good cause; for the doctrine of non-resistance was not popular among these Whigs of sixteen, and an Eton rebellion was a very serious matter. How agreeably a youth, who had a tolerant tutor and a festive dame, might pass the later years of his school life is narrated in a letter written in the summer quarter of 1767. "I believe Mr. Roberts is fixed upon to be my tutor, who is the only man in the place I have any regard for. I sin-



cerely think him the most sensible man I ever came near in my life, and has behaved himself so good natured to me all through the Remove that I shall always have a very great regard for him. Mrs. Sturges is very good natured to the boys, and behaves herself very freely amongst us; now and then gives a bottle of wine or a bowl of punch which she makes very good. I always wish your company to partake. In short we are very happy. I take no other amusement here but tennis, never enter the billiard rooms. Hulse is our best player. He was to play a set with a gentleman last week for twenty guineas, but the gentleman was afraid to play him.”<sup>12</sup>

The senators of the future, when they left school for college, found themselves in a place where boundless indulgence was shown towards the frailties of the powerful and the high born. The Duke of Grafton, in 1768, was in the very depths of a scandal of which Junius took care that all the world should be cognisant; and in the course of that very year his Grace was unanimously chosen as Chancellor for the University of Cambridge. The Earl of Sandwich had already run a dead heat for the High Stewardship of the same educational body. The University was saved from the ineffaceable disgrace which would have attended his success by the votes of the country clergy, among whom his opponent Lord Hardwicke, a nobleman of blameless character, most fortunately had, as we are told, “much connection.”<sup>13</sup> Gibbon, in three out of his six autobiographies, has related how the fourteen months which he spent at Oxford were totally lost for every purpose of study and improvement, at a college where the dull and deep potations of the fellows excused the brisk intemperance of youth, and the velvet cap of a Gentleman Commoner was the cap of liberty. His account of Magdalen is illustrated by the experience of Lord Malmesbury, who states in less finished phrases that the life among his own set at Merton was a close imitation of high life in London. Fox was at Hertford College, where he read hard; and where, poor fellow, he would have gladly remained to read if his father had not drawn him back again into the vortex of idleness and dissipation. Dr. Newcome, the Vice-Principal,

<sup>12</sup> The quotations relating to Eton are from the *Historical Manuscripts Commission*, Twelfth Report, Appendix, Part VII. A picturesque account of a school riot, which occurred there just after the close of the American war, is given in the Fourteenth Report, Appendix, Part I.

<sup>13</sup> Sandwich likewise, in the course of time, established a connection with the clergy of a sort peculiar to himself. The Rev. Mr. Hackman, who wanted to marry one of his mistresses, was hanged for murdering her; and the Rev. Dr. Dodd, who was hanged for forgery, according to Walpole had married another.

wrote to Charles that, in the absence of the one industrious undergraduate, all pretence of mathematical lectures had been abandoned for the others. After such a preliminary training a young man of fortune was started on the grand tour, to be initiated in the freemasonry of luxury and levity which then embraced the whole fashionable society of Europe. If he was his own master he travelled alone, or with a band of congenial companions. If his father was alive, he made his voyage under the ostensible superintendence of a tutor, whom he had either subjugated or quarrelled with, by the time the pair had traversed one or two foreign capitals. A youth so spent was a bad apprenticeship for the vocation of governing with insight and sympathy remote colonies inhabited by a hardy, a simple, and a religious people.

That the pictures drawn in these pages are not over-coloured will be admitted by those who compare the correspondence of George the Third and Lord North with Washington's confidential letters, or the Last Journals of Horace Walpole with the diary of John Adams;—by those who contrast the old age of Lord Holland and of Franklin, or turn from the boyhood and youth of Charles Fox and Lord Carlisle to the strait and stern upbringing of the future liberators, creators, and rulers of America. A reader of our race may well take pride in the account which the founders of the great Republic have given of themselves in documents sometimes as little intended for publication as were the confidences of George Selwyn and the Duke of Queensberry. There he may see the records of their birth, their nurture, and their early wrestling with the world. There he may admire the avidity with which, while they worked for their daily bread, they were snatching on every side at scraps of a higher education, and piecing them together into a culture admirably suited to the requirements of the high affairs of administration, and diplomacy, and war to which their destiny on a sudden was to call them. But though they had larger minds and stronger wills than the common, their lot was the same as the enormous majority of their countrymen in the Northern colonies; and their story, as far as their circumstances and chances in life were concerned, is the story of all.

The father of John Adams was a labouring farmer, who wrought hard to live, and who did much public work for nothing. His eminent son put on record that "he was an officer of militia, afterwards a deacon of the church, and a Selectman of the town; almost all the business of the town being managed by him in that department for twenty

years together; a man of strict piety, and great integrity; much esteemed and beloved, wherever he was known, which was not far, his sphere of life not being extensive." He left behind him property valued at thirteen hundred pounds, and he had made it a prime object to give the most promising of his children that college education which he himself had missed. In those last particulars, and in much else, he was just such another as the father of Thomas Carlyle; but there was this difference, that the elder John Adams, with his hard hands and his few score pounds a year, lived in a society where a man knew his own worth, and claimed and took the place which was due to him.<sup>14</sup> Progenitor of a long line of Presidents and Ambassadors, the old Selectman of Braintree town held his head as erect in every presence as did any of his descendants. His son, a generation further removed from the depressing influences of the old world, and driven by the irresistible instinct of a strong man born on the eve of stirring times, prepared himself diligently for a high career with a noble indifference to the million and one chances that were against his attaining it. While teaching in a grammar school, for the wages of a day labourer, he bound himself to an attorney, and studied hard in his remnants of leisure. For a while his prospects seemed to him doleful enough. "I long," he wrote, "to be a master of Greek and Latin. I long to prosecute the mathematical and philosophical sciences. I long to know a little of ethics and moral philosophy. But I have no books, no time, no friends. I must therefore be contented to live and die an ignorant obscure fellow."

A man who rails in that strain against his own deficiencies is seldom long in mending them. John Adams read greedily, whenever he could lay his hand on those literary works which possessed sufficient weight and momentum to have carried them across the seas and into Massachusetts,—Bacon and Bolingbroke, Bentley and Tillotson and Butler; as well as Sydenham and Boerhaave, and a whole course of medical and surgical authorities which were lent him by a physician in whose house he was lodging. After two years of this training he became a

<sup>14</sup> "Even for the mere clothes-screens of rank my father testified no contempt. Their inward claim to regard was a thing which concerned them, not him. I love to figure him addressing those men with bared head by the title of 'Your Honour,' with a manner respectful but unembarrassed; a certain manful dignity looking through his own fine face, with his noble grey head bent patiently to the alas! unworthy."—*Reminiscences of James Carlyle*, p. 16. The beautiful passage, (towards the end of the little biography,) which begins "he was born and brought up the poorest" might, even to the figure of old Mr. Carlyle's fortune, have been written word for word about the father of John Adams.

lawyer, settled himself at Braintree, and the very next morning fell to work upon his Justinian. In 1759, while still three and twenty, he rewrote for his own guidance the fable of the choice of Hercules, with girls, guns, cards, and violins on the one side, and Montesquieu and Lord Hale's "History of the Common Law" on the other. A list of the books which he had mastered, and which he planned to master, proves that his thoughts travelled far above the petty litigation of county and township. The field of study most congenial to him lay amidst those great treatises on natural law and civil law which were the proper nourishment for men who had the constitution of an empire latent in their brains. According to his own estimate he was a visionary and a trifler,—too proud to court the leaders of the local Bar, and too fine to gossip himself into the good graces of local clients. But his comrades, who knew him as the young know the young, had to seek beyond eighteen hundred years of time, and twice as many miles of space, for an historical character with whom to compare him. Jonathan Sewall, the close ally and generous rival of his early days,—who in later years justified his Christian name by an affection and fidelity proof against the strain of a difference of opinion concerning that Revolution which ruined the one friend and raised the other to the first place in the State,—consoled John Adams in his obscurity by a parallel with no less a jurist than Cicero. "Who knows," Sewall wrote, "but in future ages, when New England shall have risen to its intended grandeur, it shall be as carefully recorded that Adams flourished in the second century after the exodus of its first settlers from Great Britain, as it now is that Cicero was born in the six hundred and forty-seventh year after the building of Rome?"<sup>15</sup>

Such are the day-dreams of five and twenty, and seldom have they resulted in as notable a fulfilment. John Adams was the first who reached his goal of those young Americans whose aspirations, trivial only to the ignoble, have afforded to a great master the theme for some of his most musical sentences. "The youth, intoxicated with his admiration of a hero, fails to see that it is only a projection of his own soul which he admires. In solitude, in a remote village, the ardent youth loiters and mourns. With inflamed eye, in this sleeping wilderness, he has read the story of the Emperor Charles the Fifth, until his fancy has brought home to the surrounding woods the faint roar of cannonades in the Milanese, and marches in Germany. He is curious concerning that man's day. What filled it? The crowded orders, the stern deci-

<sup>15</sup> Sewall to Adams, 13th Feb., 1760.



sions, the foreign despatches, the Castilian etiquette. The soul answers: 'Behold his day here! In the sighing of these woods, in the quiet of these grey fields, in the cool breeze that sings out of these northern mountains; in the hopes of the morning, the ennui of the noon, and sauntering of the afternoon; in the disquieting comparisons; in the regrets at want of vigour; in the great idea, and the puny execution;—behold Charles the Fifth's day; another yet the same; behold Chatham's, Hampden's, Bayard's, Alfred's, Scipio's, Pericles's day—day of all that are born of women.'"<sup>16</sup>

The young man's outward environment was in strange contrast to the ideas on which his fancy fed. For many years to come his life was like a sonnet by Wordsworth done into dry and rugged prose. Slowly, with immense exertions of mind and body, he built up a leading practice in the scattered and remote court-houses of the rural districts. He pursued his livelihood through a continuous course of rudest travel. Side by side with passages of keen political disquisition and high-minded personal introspection his journal tells the plain pleasant narrative of his humble adventures;—how he was soaked in the rain, and pinched by cold, and sent miles out of his way by a swollen ford, and lost for hours amidst the interminable forests; where he slept, or tried to sleep, after a hard day's journey, and with what tiresome company he had to share his bedroom; where he "oated," and where the best he could do for his little mare was to set her loose, up to her shoulders in grass, in a roadside meadow; and how he reached a friend's house at a quarter after twelve in the day, just as they had got their Indian pudding, and their pork and greens, upon the table. Occupied as he was in maintaining his family, Adams never shrank from his turn of public duty. He was surveyor of the highways of Braintree, and a very good surveyor; and, rising in due course through the official hierarchy, he became assessor and overseer of the poor, and Selectman, as his father before him. In 1768 he removed to Boston, which then was just of a size with the Boston in Lincolnshire of the present day. To his younger eyes it had seemed a mighty capital, full of distractions and temptations; and the time never came when he felt at home in a town, or indeed anywhere except among the sea-breezes and the pine-forests of "still, calm, happy Braintree." "Who can study," he wrote, "in Boston streets? I cannot raise my mind above this crowd of men, women, beasts, and carriages, to think steadily. My attention is solicited every moment by some new object of sight, or some new sound. A coach,

<sup>16</sup> Emerson's oration at Dartmouth College, July, 1838.

cart, a lady, or a priest may at any time disconcert a whole page of excellent thoughts." But his position as a lawyer, and the grave aspect of national affairs,—on which his opinions, rarely and modestly expressed, were universally known, and carried unusual weight,—made it his duty to establish himself in the neighbourhood of the superior courts, and in the political centre of the colony which was soon to become, for years together, the political battle-ground of the Empire.

Jonathan Sewall, who already was Attorney-General of Massachusetts, was commissioned by the Governor to offer Adams the post of Advocate-General in the Court of Admiralty. It was, as he records, a well-paid employment, a sure introduction to the most profitable business in the province, and a first step on the ladder of favour and promotion. But Charles Townshend's new custom duties were by this time in operation; and Adams, in firm but respectful terms, replied that in the unsettled state of the country he could not place himself under an obligation of gratitude to the Government. Four years afterwards he computed his worldly wealth, and found that, after paying two hundred and fifty pounds towards the purchase of his house in town, and after acquiring twenty acres of salt-marsh in the country, he was worth three hundred pounds in money. He was seven and thirty. It was the age at which Thurlow and Wedderburn reached the rank of Solicitor-General; and at which Charles Yorke thought himself ill-used because he had been nothing higher than Attorney-General. "This," Adams wrote, "is all that my most intense application to study and business has been able to accomplish; an application that has more than once been very near costing me my life, and that has so greatly impaired my health. Thirty-seven years, more than half the life of man, are run out. The remainder of my days I shall rather decline in sense, spirit, and activity. My season for acquiring knowledge is past, and yet I have my own and my children's fortunes to make." That was the reward which hitherto had fallen to the share of one who became the ruler of the United States long before George the Third had ceased to rule the United Kingdom, and who survived until his own son asked for his blessing on the day when he, in his turn, was chosen to fill the same exalted office.

There was another celebrated colonist whose youth had been fostered at a greater distance still from the lap of luxury. The inventory of the effects owned by the great great grandfather of John Adams showed that there had been a silver spoon in the family four generations back.



But Franklin ate his breakfast with pewter out of earthenware until, when he was already a mature householder, his wife bought him a China bowl and a silver spoon, on the ground that her husband deserved to live as handsomely as any of his neighbours. If he inherited no plate, he derived a more valuable legacy from his ancestors, who in their history and their qualities were worthy forerunners of the most typical American that ever lived. England in the seventeenth century gave, or rather thrust upon, the New World much of what was staunch and true, and much also of what was quick-witted and enterprising, in her population. The Franklins, a Northamptonshire clan of very small freeholders, among whom the trade of blacksmith was as hereditary as in an Indian caste, were good Protestants in the worst of times. During the reign of Queen Mary the head of the household kept his English Bible fastened with tapes beneath the seat of a stool, and read it aloud with the stool reversed between his knees, while a child stood in the doorway to give the alarm in case an apparitor from the spiritual court was seen in the street. Benjamin Franklin's father was a stout and zealous nonconformist; and when conventicles were forbidden in England by laws cruelly conceived and rigorously enforced, he carried his wife and children to Massachusetts in order that they might enjoy the exercise of their religion in freedom. He set up at Boston first as a dyer, and then as a maker of soap and candles. The family character was marked by native ingenuity and homely public spirit. One of Franklin's uncles invented a shorthand of his own. Another, who remained at home in Northamptonshire, taught himself law; filled local offices of importance; was prime mover in all useful undertakings in town and county; and was long remembered in his village as a benefactor, an adviser, and (by the more ignorant) as a reputed conjurer. He set on foot a subscription to provide a set of chimes, which his nephew heard with satisfaction three-quarters of a century afterwards; and he discovered a simple effective method of saving the common lands from being drowned by the river. "If Franklin says he knows how to do it, it will be done," was a phrase which had passed into a proverb for the neighbourhood. He died four years to a day before his brother's famous child was born. "Had he died four years later," it was said, "one might have supposed a transmigration."

Benjamin Franklin had a right to be proud of the mental gifts which were born within him, when he looked back from the height of his fame to the material circumstances which surrounded him on his en-

trance into this world. Seldom did any man who started with as little accomplish so much, if we except certain of the august self-seekers in history whose career was carved out at a great cost of human life and human freedom. He had a year at a grammar-school, and a year at a commercial school; and then he was taken into the family business, and set to serve at the counter and run on errands. He disliked the life; and his father, who feared that he would break loose and go to sea, gravely took him a round of the shops in Boston, and showed him joiners, bricklayers, turners, braziers, and cutlers at their work, in order that, with knowledge of what he was about, he might choose his calling for himself. The boy, who was twelve years old, everywhere learned something which he never forgot, and which he turned to account in one or another of the seventy years that were before him. The combined good sense of parent and child led them to decide on the trade of a printer. He was bound apprentice, and from this time forward he read the books which passed under his hand. Others, which he loved better, he purchased to keep; dining, a joyful anchorite, on a biscuit or a handful of raisins, in order that he might spend his savings on his infant library. He gave himself a classical education out of an odd volume of the "Spectator," re-writing the papers from memory, and correcting them by the original; or turning the tales into verse, and back again into prose. He taught himself arithmetic thoroughly, and learned a little geometry and a little navigation; both of which in after days he made to go a long way, and put to great uses.

But, above all, he trained himself as a logician; making trial of many successive systems with amazing zest, until he founded an unpretentious school of his own in which his pre-eminence has never been questioned. He traversed with rapidity all the stages in the art of reasoning, from the earliest phase, when a man only succeeds in being disagreeable to his fellows, up to the period when he has become a proficient in the science of persuading them. He began by arguing to confute, "souring and spoiling the conversation," and making enemies, instead of disciples, at every turn. "I had caught this," he wrote, "by reading my father's books of dispute on religion. Persons of good sense, I have since observed, seldom fall into it, except lawyers, university men, and generally men of all sorts who have been bred at Edinburgh." He next lighted upon a copy of Xenophon's "Memorabilia," and, captivated by the charms of the Socratic dialogue, he dropped the weapons of abrupt contradiction and positive assertion, and put on the humble inquirer. He grew very expert in drawing people into con-

cessions, the consequences of which they did not foresee,—especially people who were not familiar with Shaftesbury's "Characteristics" and Collins's "Discourse on Free Thinking." From his own study of those works he had derived conclusions which made it safer for him to proselytise the Boston of that day by a process of suggestion and induction rather than by dogmatic exposition. At length he found that his friends grew wary, and would hardly reply to the most common question without asking first what he intended to infer from the answer. Then he once more changed his style of conversation, and this time for good. Keeping nothing of his former method except the habit of expressing himself "with modest diffidence," he refrained altogether from the words "certainly," and "undoubtedly," and from the air of aggressive superiority which generally accompanies them. The phrases with which he urged his point, and seldom failed to carry it, were "I conceive," or "I apprehend," or "It appears to me," or "It is so, if I am not mistaken." He made it a practice, likewise, to encourage his interlocutors to think that the opinion which he aimed at instilling into them was theirs already. If, as he pleased himself with believing, he had learned these arts from Socrates, the teaching of the Academy had for once borne an abundant crop of Baconian fruit; for it would be hard to name a man who, over so long a space of time as Franklin, ever talked so many people into doing that which was for their own improvement and advantage.

The theatre of his beneficent operations was not his native city. Boston, in common with the world at large, gathered in due time some of the crumbs which fell from the table of his inventiveness; but she very soon lost the first claim upon one who was as clever a son as even she ever produced. At the age of seventeen Franklin walked into the capital of Pennsylvania, his pockets stuffed with shirts and stockings, but empty of money; carrying a roll under each arm, and eating as he went along. The expansive possibilities of an American's career may be traced in every page of his early story. The intimate companions of his poverty, young as he, made their way in the world soon and far. One, who went to England, got himself into a couplet of the "Dunciad"; wrote a History of William the Third which was praised by Charles Fox; and extracted from the Earl of Bute a pension twice as large as Dr. Johnson's. Another became an eminent lawyer, and died rich while he and Franklin were still below middle age. The two friends had agreed that the one who left the earth first should

afterwards pay a visit to the other; but the ghost had yet to be found which had the courage to present itself to Franklin.

He worked hard, and lived very hardly indeed in Philadelphia, and in London for a while, and in Philadelphia again. At the end of ten years he was securely settled in business as a stationer and master-printer, and the owner of a newspaper which soon became an excellent property, and which bore the trace of his hand in every corner of its columns.<sup>17</sup> By a miracle of industry and thrift, he had paid out his first partners, and paid off his borrowed capital. It was no longer necessary for him to breakfast on gruel, and sup on half an anchovy and a slice of bread; to be at work when his neighbours returned at night from the club, and at work again before they rose in the morning; to wheel the paper for his Gazette home through the streets on a barrow, and to take neither rest nor recreation except when a book "debauched" him from his labours. From the moment that he had set his foot firmly on the path of fortune, he threw his vast energy, his audacious creativeness, his dexterity in the management of his fellow-creatures, and a good portion of his increased though still slender substance, into the service of his adopted city. One scheme followed hard upon another; each of them exactly suited to local wants which Franklin was quick to discern, and to a national taste with which he was entirely in sympathy. By the end of a quarter of a century Philadelphia lacked nothing that was possessed by any city in England, except a close corporation and a bull-ring, and enjoyed in addition a complete outfit of institutions which were eagerly imitated throughout the Northern colonies.

Franklin's first project was a book-club; the mother, to use his own words, of those subscription libraries which perceptibly raised the standard of American conversation, "and made tradesmen and farmers as intelligent as the gentry of other countries." Then came, in rapid succession, a volunteer fire company; a paid police-force; a public hospital; a Philosophical Society; an Academy, which he lived to see develop itself into the University of Philadelphia; and a paper currency which, with his stern views on private and public credit, he fortunately for him did not live to see at the height of its notoriety in the shape of the

<sup>17</sup> The following advertisement appears in the *Pennsylvanian Gazette*, for June 23rd, 1737: "Taken out of a pew in the church, some months since, a Common Prayer Book, bound in red, gilt, and lettered D. F. on each cover. The person who took it is desired to open it and read the eighth Commandment, and afterwards return it into the same pew again; upon which no further notice will be taken." D. F. stands for Deborah Franklin.



memorable Pennsylvanian Bonds. He turned his attention successfully to the paying and scavenging of the highways. When the city was first lighted, he designed the form of street-lamp which has long been in universal use wherever Anglosaxons now burn gas or once burned oil. He invented a hot-stove for sitting-rooms, and refused a patent for it, on the ground that he himself had profited so much by the discoveries of others that he was only too glad of an opportunity to repay his debt, and to repay it in a shape so peculiarly acceptable to his countrywomen. Whitefield, whom everybody except the clergy wished to hear, had been refused the use of the existing pulpits. Franklin, as his contribution to the cause of religion, promoted the building of a spacious meeting-house, vested in trustees, expressly for the use of any preacher of any denomination who might desire to say something to the people of Philadelphia.

In 1744, on the breaking out of war with France, Franklin excited the patriotism of Pennsylvania by voice and pen, and directed it into the practical channel of enrolling a State militia, and constructing a battery for the protection of the river. He raised the requisite funds by a lottery in which he was artful enough to induce the members of the Society of Friends to take tickets, knowing well that, without their support, no scheme appealing to the purse would be very productive in Philadelphia. In order to arm his embrasures, he applied to Governor Clinton of New York for cannon, who met him with a flat refusal. But Franklin sate with him over his Madeira until, as the bumpers went round, his Excellency consented to give six guns, then rose to ten, and ended by contributing to the defence of the Delaware no less than eighteen fine pieces, with carriages included. Eleven years afterwards, when Braddock marched to the attack of Fort Duquesne, Franklin, by the earnest request of the general, and at formidable risk to his own private fortune, organised the transport and commissariat with an ability and a foresight in marked contrast to the military conduct of the ill-fated expedition. In the terrible panic which ensued when the news of the disaster reached Philadelphia, the authorities of the colony,—catching at the hope that, as he understood everything else, there was at least a chance of his understanding how to fight,—entrusted him with the defence of the North-West frontier against the imminent peril of an Indian invasion. He levied and commanded a respectable force, and threw up a line of forts, the planning and building of which gave him the most exquisite satisfaction; and, on his return home, he accepted the highest title of a true American by be-



coming a Colonel of Militia, and was greeted by his regiment with a salvo of artillery which broke several glasses of the electrical apparatus that had already made his name famous throughout the entire scientific world.

There were few military posts with regard to which Franklin, if he was not competent to fill them himself, could not give a useful hint to their holder. The chaplain of his troops complained that the men would not attend public worship. The commanding officer accordingly suggested that the chaplain should himself serve out the rum when prayers were over; "and never," said Franklin, "were prayers more generally and punctually attended. I think this method preferable to the punishment inflicted by some military laws for non-attendance on divine service." Wherever he went, and whatever he was engaged upon, he was always calculating, and never guessing. When he built his forts, he soon noticed that two men cut down a pine of fourteen inches in diameter in six minutes, and that each pine made three palisades eighteen feet in length. When he was collecting money for his battery, he satisfied himself, by means of an intricate computation, that out of every twenty-two Quakers only one sincerely disapproved of participation in a war of defence. And on an evening when Whitefield was delivering a sermon from the top of the Court-House steps, Franklin moved about in the crowd, and measured distances, until he had ascertained that the human voice, or at any rate Whitefield's voice, could be heard by more than thirty thousand people. "This," he said, "reconciled me to the newspaper accounts of his having preached to twenty-five thousand people in the fields, and to the history of generals haranguing whole armies, of which I had sometimes doubted."

His growing reputation brought him important public employment, though not any great amount of direct public remuneration. He was chosen Clerk of the Pennsylvanian Assembly in 1736, and next year he was placed at the head of the Pennsylvanian Post Office. As time went on, the British Government, finding that the postal revenue of the colonies had fallen to less than nothing, appointed Franklin Joint Postmaster-General of America, with a colleague to help him. The pair were to have six hundred pounds a year between them, if they could make that sum out of the profits of the office. For four years the balance was against them; but at the end of that time the department, managed according to the precepts of "The Way to Wealth" in Poor Richard's Almanac, began to pay, and paid ever better yearly, until it yielded the Crown a net receipt three times as large as that of the Post

Office in Ireland. So much he did for himself, and so much more he was enabled to do for others, by a strict obedience to the promptings of a mother-wit which, in great things as in small, was all but infallible, and by a knowledge of human nature diplomatic even to the verge of wiliness. When he had a project on foot, he would put his vanity in the back-ground, and would represent the matter as the plan of a number of friends, who had requested him to go about and recommend it to public favour and support. To conciliate an enemy, if all other means failed, he would beg of him a trifling service, which in decency could not be refused; relying on the maxim that "He who has once done you a kindness will be more ready to do you another than he whom you have yourself obliged." For the furtherance of all his undertakings, he had a powerful instrument in a newspaper as respectable as it was readable; which, with a fine prescience of the possible dangers of a free press to America, and not to America alone, he steadily refused to make the vehicle of scurrilous gossip and personal detraction. By such arts as these he fulfilled to the letter the augury of his good old father, who in past days loved to remind him that a man diligent in his calling should stand before Kings, and not before mean men. "I did not think," said Franklin, "that I should ever literally stand before Kings, which, however, has since happened; for I have stood before five, and even had the honour of sitting down with one, the King of Denmark, to dinner."

Franklin had the habit, which was the basis of his originality, of practising himself what he preached to others. He kept his accounts in morals as minutely as in business matters. He drew up a catalogue of twelve virtues which it was essential to cultivate, commencing with Temperance and ending with Chastity; to which at a subsequent period a Quaker friend, who knew him well, advised him to add Humility. "My intention," he wrote, "being to acquire the *habitude* of those virtues, I judged it would be well not to distract my attention by attempting the whole at once, but to fix it on one of them at a time; and, when I should be master of that, then to proceed to another, till I should have gone through the thirteen. And, as the previous acquisition of some might facilitate the acquisition of certain others, I arranged them with that view." By the time he became Joint Postmaster-General of America, he had made his ground sure enough to justify him in relaxing his vigilance, though he carried his little book on all his voyages as a precaution and a reminder. The Joint Postmaster-General of England, who was no other than the Earl of Sand-

wich, would not have got very far along the list of virtues, at whichever end he had begun.

The leaders of thought in America, and those who in coming days were the leaders of war, had all been bred in one class or another of the same severe school. Samuel Adams, who started and guided New England in its resistance to the Stamp Act, was a Calvinist by conviction. The austere purity of his household recalled an English home in the Eastern Counties during the early half of the seventeenth century. He held the political creed of the fathers of the colony; and it was a faith as real and sacred to him as it had been to them. His fortune was small. Even in that city of plain living, men blamed him because he did not take sufficient thought for the morrow. But he had a pride which knew no shame in poverty, and an integrity far superior to its temptations. Alexander Hamilton, serving well and faithfully, but sorely against the grain, as a clerk in a merchant's office, had earned and saved the means of putting himself, late in the day, to college. Jefferson, who inherited wealth, used it to obtain the highest education which his day and his country could provide; entered a profession; and worked at it after such a fashion that by thirty he was the leading lawyer of his colony, and that no less a colony than Virginia. The future warriors of the Revolution had a still harder apprenticeship. Israel Putnam had fought the Indians and the French for a score of years, and in a score of battles; leading his men in the dress of a woodman, with firelock on shoulder and hatchet at side; a powder horn under his right arm, and a bag of bullets at his waist; and, (as the distinctive equipment of an officer,) a pocket compass to guide their marches through the forest. He had known what it was to have his comrades scalped before his eyes, and to stand gashed in the face with a tomahawk, and bound to the trunk of a tree, with a torture-fire crackling about him. From adventures which, in the back settlements, were regarded merely as the harder side of a farmer's work, he would go home to build fences with no consciousness of heroism, and still less with any anticipation of the world-famous scenes for his part in which these experiences of the wilderness were training them. Nathaniel Greene, the ablest of Washington's lieutenants,—of those at any rate who remained true to their cause from first to last,—was one of eight sons, born in a house of a single story. His father combined certain humble trades with the care of a small farm, and, none the less or the worse on account of his week-day avocations, was a preacher of

the gospel. "The son," Mr. Bancroft tells us, "excelled in diligence and manly sports. None of his age could wrestle, or skate, or run better than he, or stand before him as a neat ploughman and skilful mechanic." Under such literary and scientific guidance as he could find among his neighbours, he learned geometry, and its application to the practical work of a new country. He read poetry and philosophy, as they are read by a man of many and great thoughts, whose books are few but good. Above all, he made a special study of Plutarch and of Cæsar,—authors who, whether in a translation, or in the original Greek and Latin, never give out their innermost meaning except to brave hearts on the eve of grave events.<sup>18</sup>

Meantime the military chief upon whom the main weight of responsibility was to rest had been disciplined for his career betimes. At an age when a youth of his rank in England would have been shirking a lecture in order to visit Newmarket, or settling the colour of his first lace coat, Washington was surveying the valleys of the Alleghany Mountains. He slept in all weathers under the open sky; he swam his horses across rivers swollen with melted snow; and he learned, as sooner or later a soldier must, to guess what was on the other side of the hill, and to judge how far the hill itself was distant. At nineteen he was in charge of a district on the frontier; and at twenty-two he fought his first battle, with forty men against five and thirty, and won a victory, on its own small scale, as complete as that of Quebec. The leader of the French was killed, and all his party shot down or taken. It was an affair which, coming at one of the rare intervals when the world was at peace, made a noise as far off as Europe, and gained for the young officer in London circles a tribute of hearty praise, with its due accompaniment of envy and misrepresentation. Horace Walpole gravely records in his *Memoirs of George the Second* that Major Washington had concluded the letter announcing his success with the words: "I heard the bullets whistle, and, believe me, there is something charming in the sound." Of course there was nothing of the sort in the despatch, which in its business-like simplicity might have been written by Wellington at six and forty. Many years afterwards a clergyman, braver even than Washington, asked him if the story was true. "If I said so," replied the General, "it was when I was young."

<sup>18</sup> Those who read or write about the American Revolution must feel it almost an impertinence to define their obligations to Mr. Bancroft, and to specify the items of the debt which they owe him. His *History of the United States of America* supplies a vast mass of detail, illuminated by a fine spirit of liberty, which is inspired indeed by patriotism, but is not bounded in its scope by any limitations of country or of century.



But his was a fame which struck its roots deepest in discouragement, and even in defeat; and that unwelcome feature in his destiny he soon had cause to recognise. He came from the ambushade in front of Fort Duquesne with thirty men alive out of his three companies of Virginians; with four shot-holes in his coat; and a name for coolness and conduct which made him the talk of the whole empire, and the pride of the colony that bore him. During the three coming years, as Commander in Chief of her forces, he did his utmost to keep her borders safe and her honour high. For himself it was a season of trial, sore to bear, but rich in lessons. The Governor of Virginia grudged him rank and pay, and stinted him in men and means; lost no opportunity of reminding him that he was a provincial and not a royal officer; and made himself the centre of military intrigues which gave Washington a foretaste of what he was to endure at the hands of Charles Lee, and Gates, and Benedict Arnold in the darkest hours of his country's history. But a time came when William Pitt, who understood America, was in a position to insist on fair play and equal treatment to the colonists who were supporting so large a share in the burdens and dangers of the war. Under his auspices Washington directed the advanced party of an expedition which placed the British flag on Fort Duquesne, and performed the last offices to the mortal remains of those British soldiers who had perished in the woods which covered the approaches to the fatal stronghold. After this success, which made his native province as secure from invasion as Somersetshire, the young man retired into private life, with no recompense for his services except the confidence and gratitude of his fellow-citizens. He had received a practical education in the science of generalship such as few except born princes have ever acquired by six and twenty, combined with a mental and moral drilling more indispensable still to one whose military difficulties, however exceptionally arduous, were the smallest part of the ordeal laid up for him in the future.

Such were the men who had been reluctantly drawn by their own sense of duty, and by the urgent appeals of friends and neighbours, into the front rank of a conflict which was none of their planning. Some of them were bred in poverty, and all of them lived in tranquil and modest homes. They made small gains by their private occupations, and did much public service for very little or for nothing, and in many cases out of their own charges. They knew of pensions and sinecures only by distant hearsay; and ribands or titles were so much



outside their scope that they had not even to ask themselves what those distinctions were worth. Their antecedents and their type of character were very different from those of any leading Minister in the British Cabinet; and they were likely to prove dangerous customers when the one class of men and of ideas was brought into collision with the other. While Washington and the Adamses led laborious days, the English statesmen who moulded the destinies of America into such an unlooked-for shape were coming to the front by very different methods. They had for the most part trod an easier though a more tortuous path to place and power; or rather to the power of doing as their monarch bade them. George the Third's system of personal government had long become an established fact, and the career of an aspirant to office under that system was now quite an old story. "A young man is inflamed with the love of his country. Liberty charms him. He speaks, writes, and drinks for her. He searches records, draws remonstrances, fears Prerogative. A secretary of the Treasury waits on him in the evening. He appears next morning at a minister's levee. He goes to Court, is captivated by the King's affability, moves an address, drops a censure on the liberty of the press, kisses hands for a place, bespeaks a Birthday coat, votes against Magna Charta, builds a house in town, lays his farms into pleasure-grounds under the inspection of Mr. Brown, pays nobody, games, is undone, asks a reversion for three lives, is refused, finds the constitution in danger, and becomes a patriot once more."<sup>19</sup> That passage would be no libel if applied to all except a few members of the Government;—a Government which was controlled by the Bedfords, and advised on legal questions by Wedderburn, whose creed was self-interest; and which was soon to be advised on military questions by Lord George Germaine, who had forfeited his reputation by refusing to bring forward the cavalry at Minden. It was a cruel fate for a country possessing statesmen like Chatham and Burke, a jurist like Camden, and soldiers with the unstained honour and solid professional attainments of Conway and Barré. With such talents lying unemployed, and such voices crying unheeded, the nation was precipitated into a gratuitous and deplorable policy by men who did not so much as believe in the expediency of the course which they were pursuing. To the worse, and unfortunately the abler, section of the Ministry, the right and wrong of the question mattered not one of the straws in which their champagne bottles were packed; while the better of them, knowing perfectly well that the

<sup>19</sup> *The Spectator*. Number None, written by Nobody. Sunday, January 19th, 1772.

undertaking on which they had embarked was a crime and a folly, with sad hearts and sore consciences went into the business, and some of them through the business, because the King wished it.

And yet, of all the political forces then in existence, the King's influence was the very last which ought to have been exerted against the cause of concord. He might well have been touched by the persistence with which his American subjects continued to regard him as standing towards them in that relation which a sovereign "born and bred a Briton" should of all others prefer. A law-respecting people, who did not care to encroach on the privileges of others, and liked still less to have their own rights invaded, they were slow to detect the tricks which of recent years had been played with the essential doctrines of the English Constitution. When the home Government ill used them, they blamed the Ministry, and pleased themselves by believing that the King, if he ever could contemplate the notion of stretching his prerogative, would be tempted to do so for the purpose of protecting them. George the Third was the object of hope and warm devotion in America at the moment when, in the City of London, and among the freeholders of the English counties, he was in the depths of his unpopularity. In the April of 1768 the King, if he had listened to any adviser except his own stout heart, would not have ventured to show himself outside his palace. His Lord Steward was exchanging blows with the angry Liverymen at the doors of the Presence Chamber, and the Grand Jury of Middlesex was refusing to return the rioters for trial. Junius could not attack the Crown too ferociously, or flatter Wilkes too grossly, to please the public taste. But in that very month Franklin, writing to a Pennsylvanian correspondent a sentiment with which almost every Pennsylvanian would have concurred, expressed his conviction that some punishment must be preparing for a people who were ungratefully abusing the best constitution, and the best monarch, any nation was ever blessed with. A year afterwards, in the letter which conveyed to his employers in America the unwelcome intelligence that the House of Commons had refused to repeal Townshend's custom-duties, Franklin carefully discriminated between the known ill-will entertained by Parliament towards the colonies, and the presumed personal inclinations of the King. "I hope nothing that has happened, or may happen, will diminish in the least our loyalty to our sovereign or affection for this nation in general. I can scarcely conceive a King of better dispositions, or more exemplary virtues, or more truly desirous of promoting the welfare of all his subjects. The body of this people,

too, is of a noble and generous nature, loving and honouring the spirit of liberty, and hating arbitrary power of all sorts. We have many, very many, friends among them." Six years afterwards, when the first blood had been shed,—when George the Third was writing to his Minister to express his delight at the cruel laws that were passed against the colonists, and his discontent with every English public man who still regarded his brethren across the water with friendly, or even tolerant, feelings,—this letter, with others from the same hand, was seized by a British officer in Boston, and sent to London to be submitted to his Majesty's inspection. With what sensations must he then have read the evidence of a love and a loyalty which by that time were dead for ever!

Franklin, in the passage which has been quoted, did well to give the British people their share in the good-will which America felt towards the British sovereign. The colonists were favourably disposed to George the Third not only for himself, or for his supposed self, but because he was the great representative of the mother-country,—the figurehead of the stately ship which so long had carried the undivided fortunes of their race. They loved the King because they dearly loved the name, the associations, the literature, the religious faith, the habits, the sports, the art, the architecture, the scenery, the very soil, of his kingdom. That love was acknowledged in pathetic language by men who had drawn their swords against us because, willing to owe everything else to England, they did not recognise her claim to measure them out their portion of liberty. The feeling entertained towards her by some of the best of those who were forced by events to enroll themselves among her adversaries is well exemplified by the career and the writings of Alexander Garden. Born in South Carolina, he had been sent to Europe for his education. When he came to man's estate, he defied a loyalist father in order to fight for the Revolution under Nathaniel Greene and Henry Lee. In his later years he collected an enormous multitude of personal anecdotes relating to the great struggle, told with transparent fidelity, but infused with no common dose of that bombastic element which in our generation has died out from American literature, but not before it has made for itself an imperishable name. "One truth," (so Garden wrote in his better and less ornate style,) "comes home to the recollection of every man who lived in those days. The attachment to England was such that to whatever the colonists wished to affix the stamp of excellence the title of 'English' was always given. To reside in England was the object of universal desire, the cherished hope of every bosom. It was considered as the delightful

haven, where peace and happiness were alone to be looked for. A parent sending his sons to Eton or Westminster would say: 'I am sending my sons home for their education.' If he himself should cross the Atlantic, though but for a summer season, to witness their progress, he would say, 'I am going home to visit my children.'"

The esteem and veneration of America had been concentrated all the more upon the throne itself, because there were very few British statesmen whose names were household words in the colonies. The difficulties of locomotion were still so great that not one rural constituent out of a hundred in England had ever heard his member speak in Parliament. It was hard enough for a Yorkshireman or a Cornishman to feel much enthusiasm for orators reported after the meagre and whimsical fashion then in vogue, by which editors hoped to baffle or conciliate the Government censors. But his ignorance was enlightenment compared with the bewilderment of a New Englander who read in the "Gentleman's Magazine" of four months back how the Nardac Poltrand had moved an address in the House of Hurgoes, complaining of the injuries sustained by Lilliputian subjects trading in Columbia; and how the Hurgo Ghewor, (in an harangue continued from the last number of the Magazine,) had replied that ungrounded jealousy of Blefuscu had already cost the Treasury of Lilliput no less than five hundred thousand sprugs. About any individual Right Honourable gentleman or Lord Temporal the colonists knew little, and cared less; and their only concern with Lords Spiritual was to insist, obstinately and most successfully, that they should keep themselves on their own side of the Atlantic. But at last a man arose whose deeds spoke for him, and the fragments of whose eloquence were passed far and wide from mouth to ear, and did not lose the stamp of their quality in the carrying. With his broad heart, his swift perception, and his capacious intellect, Chatham knew America, and he loved her; and he was known and loved by her in return. He had done more for her than any ruler had done for any country since William the Silent saved and made Holland; and she repaid him with a true loyalty. When the evil day came, it was to Chatham that she looked for the good offices which might avert an appeal to arms. When hostilities had broken out, she fixed on him her hopes of an honourable peace. And when he died,—in the very act of confessing her wrongs, though of repudiating and condemning the establishment of that national independence on which her own mind was by that time irrevocably set,—she refused



to allow that she had anything to forgive him, and mourned him as a father of her people.

His name recalled proud memories, in whatever part of the colonies it was spoken. Throughout a splendid and fruitful war Americans, under his guidance, had fought side by side with Englishmen as compatriots rather than as auxiliaries. They had given him cheerfully, in men, in money, and in supplies, whatever he had asked to aid the national cause and secure the common safety. On one single expedition nine thousand provincials had marched from the Northern districts alone. The little colony of Connecticut had five thousand of her citizens under arms. Massachusetts raised seven thousand militia-men, and taxed herself at the rate of thirteen shillings and fourpence in the pound of personal income. New Jersey expended during every year of the war at the rate of a pound a head for each of her inhabitants. That was how the French were cleared from the great Lakes, and from the valley and the tributaries of the Ohio. That was how Ticonderoga and Crownpoint fell, and the way was opened for the siege of Quebec and the conquest of the French Dominion. What they had done before, the colonists were willing and ready to do again, if they were allowed to do it in their own fashion. In every successive war with a foreign enemy England would have found America's power to assist the mother-country doubled, and her will as keen as ever. The colonies which, for three livelong years between the spring of 1775 and the spring of 1778, held their own against the unbroken and undiverted strength of Britain, would have made short work of any army of invasion that the Court of Versailles, with its hands full in Europe, could have detached to recover Canada or to subdue New England. Armed vessels in great number would have been fitted out by a patriotism which never has been averse to that enticing form of speculation, and would have been manned by swarms of handy and hardy seamen, who in war-time found privateering safer work than the fisheries, and vastly more exciting. The seas would have been made so hot by the colonial corsairs that no French or Spanish trader would have shown her nose outside the ports of St. Domingo or Cuba except under an escort numerous enough to invite the grim attentions of a British squadron. But it was a very different matter that America should be called upon to maintain a standing army of royal troops, at a moment when not a grain of our powder was being burned in anger on the surface of the globe; and that those troops should be quartered permanently within her borders, and paid out of American taxes which



the British Parliament had imposed, exacted by tax-gatherers commissioned by the British Ministry. It is hard to understand how any set of statesmen, who knew the methods which Chatham had employed with brilliant success, should have conceived the design of using German mercenaries and Indian savages to coerce English colonists into defending the Empire in exact accordance with the ideas which happened to find favour in Downing Street.

So great was the value of America for fighting purposes. But, in peace and war alike, her contribution to the wealth, the power, the true renown of England, exceeded anything which hitherto had marked the mutual relations of a parent State with a colony; and that contribution was growing fast. Already the best of customers, she took for her share more than a fourth part of the sixteen million pounds' worth in annual value at which the British exports were then computed; and no limit could be named to the expansion of a trade founded on the wants of a population which had doubled itself within a quarter of a century, and whose standard of comfort was rising even more rapidly than its numbers. But the glory which was reflected on our country by her great colony was not to be measured by tons of goods or thousands of dollars. All who loved England wisely, dwelt with satisfaction upon the prosperity of America. It was to them a proud thought that so great a mass of industry, such universally diffused comfort, so much public disinterestedness and private virtue, should have derived its origin from our firesides, and have grown up under our ægis. The Revolutionary war, like all civil wars, changed many things and troubled many waters. It must be accounted a misfortune that American society and the American character were not allowed to develop themselves in a natural and unbroken growth from the point which they had reached at the close of the first century and a half of their history. At the end of the protracted conflict between the Stuarts and the party which stood for English liberty, Englishmen were very different from what they had been when it began. That difference was not in all respects for the better, as is shown by a comparison between the biographies of our public men, and the records of our country houses, at the one period and the other. And in like manner the mutual hatred felt, and the barbarities inflicted and suffered, by partisans of either side in Georgia and the Carolinas between 1776 and 1782 left behind them in those regions habits of lawlessness and violence evil traces of which lasted into our lifetime. As for the

Northern States, it was a pity that the wholesome and happy conditions of existence prevailing there before the struggle for Independence were ever disturbed; for no change was likely to improve them. If the King, as a good shepherd, was thinking of his flock and not of himself, it is hard to see what he hoped to do for their benefit. All they asked of him was to be let alone; and with reason; for they had as just cause for contentment as the population of any ideal State from More's Utopia downwards. And, indeed, the American colonists had the best in the comparison, for there existed among them a manliness, a self-reliance, and a spirit of clear-sighted conformity to the inexorable laws of the universe, which are not to be found in the romances of optimism. "I have lately," wrote Franklin, "made a tour through Ireland and Scotland. In those countries a small part of the society are landlords, great noblemen, and gentlemen, extremely opulent, living in the highest affluence and magnificence. The bulk of the people are tenants, extremely poor, living in the most sordid wretchedness, in dirty hovels of mud and straw, and clothed only in rags. I thought often of the happiness of New England, where every man is a freeholder, has a vote in public affairs, lives in a tidy warm house, has plenty of good food and fuel, with whole clothes from head to foot, the manufacture perhaps of his own family."<sup>20</sup>

It was no wonder that they were freeholders, when real property could be bought for little in the cultivated parts of New England, and for next to nothing in the outlying districts. Land was no dearer as the purchaser travelled southwards. There is in existence an amusing series of letters from a certain Alexander Mackrabie in America to his brother-in-law in England: and that brother-in-law knew a good letter from a dull one, inasmuch as he was Philip Francis. In 1770 Mackrabie wrote from Philadelphia to ask what possessed Junius to address the King in a letter "past all endurance," and to inquire who the devil Junius was. He sweetened the alarm which he unconsciously gave to his eminent correspondent by offering him a thousand good acres in Maryland for a hundred and thirty pounds, and assuring him that farms on the Ohio would be "as cheap as stinking mackerel."<sup>21</sup> Colonists whose capital consisted in their four limbs, especially if they were skilled mechanics, had no occasion to envy people who could buy land, or who had inherited it. Social existence in America was pro-

<sup>20</sup> Benjamin Franklin to Joshua Badcock, London, 13 January, 1772.

<sup>21</sup> *Memoirs of Sir Philip Francis*, vol. i., p. 439.

foundly influenced by the very small variation of income, and still smaller of expenditure, at every grade of the scale. The Governor of a great province could live in style in his city house and his country house, and could keep his coach and what his guests called a genteel table, on five hundred pounds a year, or something like thirty shillings for each of his working days. A ship's carpenter, in what was for America a great city, received five and sixpence a day, including the value of his pint of rum, the amount of alcohol contained in which was about an equivalent to the Governor's daily allowance of Madeira. The Rector of Philadelphia Academy, who taught Greek and Latin, received two hundred pounds a year; the Mathematical Professor a hundred and twenty-five pounds; and the three Assistant Tutors sixty pounds apiece;—all in local currency, from which about forty per cent. would have to be deducted in order to express the sums in English money. In currency of much the same value a house carpenter or a bricklayer earned eight shillings a day, which was as much as a Mathematical Professor, and twice as much as an Assistant Tutor.<sup>22</sup>

All lived well. All had a share in the best that was going; and the best was far from bad. The hot buckwheat cakes, the peaches, the great apples, the turkey or wild-goose on the spit, and the cranberry sauce stewing in the skillet, were familiar luxuries in every household. Authoritative testimony has been given on this point by Brillat Savarin, in his "*Physiologie de Goût*,"—the most brilliant book extant on that which, if mankind were candid, would be acknowledged as the most universally interesting of all the arts. When he was driven from his country by the French Revolution, he dined with a Connecticut yeoman on the produce of the garden, the farmyard, and the orchard. There was "a superb piece of corned beef, a stewed goose, and a magnificent leg of mutton, with vegetables of every description, two jugs of cider, and a tea-service," on the table round which the illustrious epicure, the host, and the host's four handsome daughters were sitting. For twenty years and thirty years past such had been the Sunday and holiday fare of a New England freeholder; except that in 1774 a pretty patriot would as soon have offered a guest a cup of vitriol as a cup of tea. A member of what in Europe was called the lower class

<sup>22</sup> The salaries are mentioned in various letters of Franklin. The wages he quotes from Adam Smith, who, says his biographer, "had been in the constant habit of hearing much about the American colonies and their affairs, during his thirteen years in Glasgow, from the intelligent merchants and returned planters of the city."—Rae's *Life of Adam Smith*, p. 266.

had in America fewer cares, and often more money, than those who, in less favoured lands, would have passed for his betters. His children were taught at the expense of the township; while a neighbour who aspired to give his son a higher education was liable to be called on to pay a yearly fee of no less than a couple of guineas. And the earner of wages was emancipated from the special form of slavery which from very early days had established itself in the Northern States,—the tyranny exercised over the heads of a domestic establishment by those whom they had occasion to employ.<sup>23</sup>

Equality of means, and the total absence of privilege, brought about their natural result in the ease, the simplicity, the complete freedom from pretension, which marked the intercourse of society. The great had once been as the least of their neighbours, and the small looked forward some day to be as the best of them. James Putnam, the ablest lawyer in all America, loved to walk in the lane where, as a child of seven years old, he drove the cows to pasture. Franklin, when a poor boy, living on eighteen pence a week, was sought, and almost courted, by the Governor of Pennsylvania and the Governor of New York. Confidence in a future which never deceived the industrious showed itself in early marriages; and early marriages brought numerous, healthy, and welcome children. There was no searching of heart in an American household when a new pair of hands was born into the world. The first Adams who was a colonist had eight sons, with whatever daughters heaven sent him; his eldest son had a family of twelve, and his eldest son a family of twelve again. Franklin had seen thirteen of his own father's children sitting together round the table, who all grew up, and who all in their turn were married. "With us," he wrote, "marriages are in the morning of life; our children are educated and settled in the world by noon; and thus, our own business being done, we have an afternoon and evening of cheerful leisure to ourselves."

The jolly relative of Philip Francis took a less cheerful view of the same phenomenon. "The good people," he wrote, "are marrying one another as if they had not a day to live. I allege it to be a plot that

<sup>23</sup> "You can have no idea," Mackrabe wrote to Francis in 1769, "of the plague we have with servants on this side the water. If you bring over a good one he is spoilt in a month. Those from the country are insolent and extravagant. The imported Dutch are to the last degree ignorant and awkward." The rest of the observations made by this rather narrow-minded Briton upon the other nationalities which supplied the household service of America had better be read in the original book, if they are read at all.—*Memoirs of Sir Philip Francis*, vol. i., p. 435.



the ladies, (who are all politicians in America), are determined to raise young rebels to fight against old England." Throughout the colonies the unmarried state was held in scanty honour. Bachelors, whether in the cities or villages, were poorly supplied with consolations and distractions. The social resources of New York, even for a hospitably treated stranger, were not inexhaustible. "With regard," Mackrabie complained, "to the people, manner, living, and conversation, one day shows you as much as fifty. Here are no diversions at all at present. I have gone dining about from house to house, but meet with the same dull round of topics everywhere:—lands, Madeira wine, fishing parties, or politics. They have a vile practice here of playing back-gammon, a noise which I detest, which is going forward in the public coffee-houses from morning till night, frequently ten or a dozen tables at a time. I think a single man in America is one of the most wretched beings I can conceive." The taverns in country districts were uncomfortable, and, as centres of relaxation and sociable discourse, unlovely. Adams, who had put up at a hundred of them, complained that a traveller often found more dirt than entertainment and accommodation in a house crowded with people drinking flip and toddy, and plotting to get the landlord elected to a local office at the next town's meeting.

In a new country the graces and amenities,—and all the provisions for material, intellectual, and what little there may be of artistic pleasure,—are within the home, and not outside it. Women in America were already treated with a deference which was a sign of the part they played in the serious affairs of life. They had not to put up with the conventional and over-acted homage which in most European countries was then the substitute for their due influence and their true liberty. Married before twenty, and generally long before twenty, they received in the schoolroom an education of the shortest, and something of the flimsiest. To work cornucopias and Birds of Paradise in coloured wools, to construct baskets of ornamental shells, and to accompany a song on the virginals, the spinet, or the harpsichord, were the accomplishments which an American girl had time to learn, and could find instructors to teach her. But, like the best women in every generation before our own, their most valuable attainments were those which, in the intervals of domestic cares, they taught themselves with a favourite author in their hand, and their feet on the fender. In their literary preferences they were behindhand in point of time; but it was not to



their loss. John Quincy Adams, the second President of his race, relates how lovingly and thoroughly his mother knew her Shakespeare and her Milton, her Dryden, her Pope, and her Addison; and how, when she was in need of a quotation tinged with modern ideas of liberty, she had recourse to Young and Thomson. He well remembered the evening when the cannon had fallen silent on Bunker's Hill, and Massachusetts began to count her losses. A child of eight, he heard Mrs. Adams apply to Joseph Warren, their family friend and family physician, the lines,—mannered indeed, and stilted, but not devoid of solemn and sincere feeling,—which Collins addressed to the memory of a young officer who had been killed at Fontenoy.

But we need not go to sons and husbands for our knowledge of what the matrons of the Revolution were. The gentlemen of France who came to the help of America, were quick to discern the qualities which dignified and distinguished her women; and it is to the credit of the young fellows that they eagerly admired an ideal of conduct which might have been supposed to be less to the taste of a soldier of passage than that which they had left behind them at Paris. It is difficult to believe that the Knight-errants of the war of Independence, each of them the soul of chivalry, belonged to the same nation as certain swashbucklers of Napoleon who, after trailing their sabres over Europe, confided to the chance reader of their autobiographies their personal successes, real or pretended, among beautiful and unpatriotic women in the countries which they had visited as invaders. After their return home Lafayette and de Ségur, courageous in the drawing-room as in the field, openly proclaimed and steadfastly maintained that in the beauty, elegance, and talent of its ladies Boston could hold its own with any capital city, that of France included. De Ségur, in particular, astonished and charmed his hearers by his description of a community where what passed as gallantry in Paris was called by a very plain name indeed; where women of station rode, drove, and walked unattended both in town and country; where girls of sixteen trusted themselves to the escort of a guest who yesterday had been a stranger, and talked to him as frankly and as fast as if he had been a cousin or a brother; and, above all, where a young Quakeress who, in her white dress and close muslin cap, looked, (though he did not tell her so,) like a nymph rather than a mortal, lectured him on having deserted his wife and children to pursue the wicked calling of a soldier, and sternly rejected the plea that he had severed himself from all

that he held most dear in order to fight for the liberty of her country.<sup>24</sup> After the war was over, he embodied his experience and his observations in a series of predictions concerning the future of the United States. He clearly foresaw that the question whether the South and North were to part company would one day arise in a formidable shape. He foretold that wealth would bring luxury, and luxury corruption. But with regard to that private morality which, of all that he found in America, he approved the most, he did not venture on a specific prophecy. "I shall be told," he wrote, "that America will not always preserve these simple virtues and these pure manners; but if she preserves them only for a century, that at any rate will be a century gained."

<sup>24</sup> Voltaire, an old friend of de Ségur's mother, in half a dozen sentences full of wisdom and good feeling, and turned as only he could turn them, had given him his literary blessing, and the advice to keep to prose. That advice was religiously followed by a family which handed down through three generations, in unbroken succession from father to son, the good traditions of the memoir-writer. There is an extraordinary likeness, in form and substance, between the writing of the father, who served in the American war, and afterwards became French ambassador to Russia; of the son, who told the story of Austerlitz and the retreat from Moscow; and of the grandson, author of the *Life of Count Rostopchine*. Which of the three wrote best is a problem of the sort that to those who love books will always remain the idlest of questions.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MILITARY OCCUPATION OF BOSTON. THE DIFFICULTIES CONNECTED WITH TRADE AND REVENUE BECOME ACUTE

SUCH was the country, and such the people, on which the British Cabinet now tried the experiment of carrying through a political policy by the pressure of an armed force. They were blind to the truth which Byron, a genuine statesman, expressed in the sentence, "The best prophet of the future is the past." For that experiment had never succeeded when an English-speaking population was made the subject of it. It had been tried under the Commonwealth when the Major-Generals administered England and the Journal of George Fox, read side by side with Hudibras, proves that the saints liked being ruled by saints in red coats almost as little as did the sinners. It had been tried after the Restoration, when the Stuarts espoused the cause of the Bishops as against the Scotch Covenanters; and the result was, over the whole of the south of Scotland, to kill the cause of the Bishops and of the Stuarts too. And in 1688 the wrath and terror which the mere threat of coercion by an Irish army excited throughout the kingdom did much to ruin James the Second, as it had ruined his father before him.

Now the same remedy, fatal always to the physician, was applied to a case that differed from those which preceded it only in being more hopelessly unsuited to such a treatment. The character, the circumstances, and the history of the inhabitants of New England made it certain that they would feel the insult bitterly and resent it fiercely. It was a measure out of which, from the very nature of it, no good could be anticipated; and it may well be doubted whether the authors of it, in their heart of hearts, expected or desired that any good should come. The crime of Massachusetts was that she refrained from buying British goods, and that she had petitioned the Crown in respectful terms.

Fifty regiments could not oblige her to do the one, or make her think that she had been wrong in having done the other. And, in truth, the action of the British Government was intended to punish, and not to persuade. It was a device essentially of the same sinister class as the Dragonnades which preceded the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes; less trenchant, indeed, in its operation, owing to the difference in type of the instruments employed; for British soldiers were too good to be set to such work, and far too manly and kind-hearted to do it efficaciously. But the motives that suggested and brought about the military occupation of Boston showed poorly, in one important respect, even by the side of those which actuated Louis the Fourteenth and his clerical advisers. In both cases there was ruffled pride, the determination at all costs to get the upper hand, and want of sympathy which had deepened down into estrangement and positive ill-will. But the French monarch at least believed that, by making his subjects miserable in this world, he would possibly save their souls in the next, and would undoubtedly cleanse his dominions from the stain of heresy; whereas the quarrel between George the Third and his people beyond the sea was of the earth, earthy. As the Elizabethan poet had said in good prose: "Some would think the souls of princes were brought forth by some more weighty cause than those of meaner persons. They are deceived; there's the same hand to them; the like passions sway them. The same reason that makes a vicar go to law for a tithe-pig, and undo his neighbours, makes them spoil a whole province, and batter down goodly cities with the cannon."<sup>1</sup>

The King was determined to stand on his extreme rights; and he met his match in the Americans. In their case he had to do with people accurately and minutely acquainted with what was due to them and from them, and little likely to miss, or refrain from pressing to the utmost, any single point which told in their favour. Burke was informed by an eminent bookseller that in no branch of his business, after tracts of popular devotion, were so many volumes exported to the colonies as those which related to the law. Nearly as many copies of Blackstone's Commentaries had been sold in America as in England. So eager were the colonists to read our treatises on jurisprudence that they had fallen into the way of reprinting them across the Atlantic; a habit, it must be allowed, which they soon applied on a generous scale to more attractive classes of literature. Burke had observed and investigated America with the same passionate curiosity

<sup>1</sup> Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*, Act ii., Scene 1.



that he subsequently bestowed upon India. He arrived at the conclusion that a circumstance which made against peace, unless the British Government reverted to the paths of caution, was to be found in the addiction of the colonists to the study of the law. "This study," he said, "renders men acute, inquisitive, dexterous, prompt in attack, ready in defence, full of resources. In other countries the people, more simple, and of a less mercurial cast, judge of an ill principle in government only by an actual grievance; there they anticipate the evil, and judge of the pressure of the grievance by the badness of the principle. They augur misgovernment at a distance, and snuff the approach of tyranny in every tainted breeze."<sup>2</sup>

The times were such that the lawyers in America, like all other men there, had to choose their party. In the Government camp were those favoured persons whom the Crown regularly employed in court; and those who held, or looked to hold, the posts of distinction and emolument with which the colonies abounded. For the Bar in America, as in Ireland and Scotland to this day, was a public service as well as a profession. But, with these exceptions, most lawyers were patriots; for the same reason that, (as the royal Governors complained,) every patriot was, or thought himself, a lawyer. The rights and liberties of the province had long been the all-pervading topic of conversation in Massachusetts. There were few briefs for a learned gentleman who, in General Putnam's tavern or over Mr. Hancock's dining-table, took the unpopular side in an argument; especially if he did not know how to keep those who came to him for advice on the safe side of a penal statute. "Look into these papers," said an English Attorney-General in 1768, "and see how well these Americans are versed in the Crown law. I doubt whether they have been guilty of an overt act of treason, but I am sure that they have come within a hair's breadth of it."<sup>3</sup> Leading merchants, who were likewise eminently respectable smugglers on an enormous scale, were the best clients of a Boston advocate. Their quarrels with the Commissioners of Revenue brought him large fees, and coveted opportunities for a display of eloquence. His wits as a casuist were sharpened by a life-time of nice steering among the intricacies of the commercial code; and the experience which he thence gained taught him as a politician to assume higher ground, and to demand that trade should be as free and open

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Burke's Speech on moving his Resolution for Conciliation with the Colonies.

<sup>3</sup> Bancroft's History, Epoch III., chapter 37.

to British subjects in the New World as it was to those in the Old.<sup>4</sup> His public attitude was stiffened by the recollection of a threat which had been levelled against his private interests. A secondary, but an evident and even confessed, object of the Stamp Act had been to impose a prohibitory tax upon the manufacture of legal documents, and thereby to injure the practice, and pare away the gains, of those unofficial lawyers among whom were to be found the most skilful and stubborn opponents of the Government.

Already the commercial prosperity of the mother-country was grievously impaired. The colonists had met Charles Townshend's policy by an agreement not to consume British goods; and the value of such goods exported to New England, New York, and Pennsylvania fell in a single year from 1,330,000*l* to 400,000*l*. Washington, when he sent his annual order for a supply of European commodities to London, enjoined his correspondent to forward none of the articles unless the offensive Act of Parliament was in the meantime repealed. Less scrupulous patriots found reason to wish that they had followed his example. Mackrabie relates how two Philadelphians had sent over for a Cheshire cheese and a hogshead of English Entire Butt. "These delicacies happened unfortunately to have been shipped from Europe after the Resolutions on this side had transpired, and in consequence the Committee took the liberty to interfere. The purchasers made a gallant stand, but their opposition was in vain. They cursed and swore, kicked, and cuffed, and pulled noses; but the catastrophe was that the prisoners were regaled with the cheese and porter. They have sent away a ship loaded with malt to-day. Nobody could either buy or store it." The phraseology of the movement against taxation without representation appeared in odd places. A mechanic, whose shop had been broken open, advertised a reward for the apprehension of the thief, and reminded his fellow-citizens how hard it was for a man to part with his own property without his own consent. It is curious to note that Grenville, as the father of the Stamp Act, till his death, and long after it, came in for much of the discredit which properly belonged to Charles Townshend. "I would not as a friend," Mackrabie wrote from Philadelphia, "advise Mr. George Grenville to come and pass a summer in North America. It might be unsafe." This was in 1768. But as late as

<sup>4</sup> These are the words of Mr. Sabine in his *Historical Essay* at the commencement of his two volumes on the American Loyalists. His description of the opinions prevalent in the several professions at the commencement of the Revolution is amusing and instructive.

1773 Burke, who, of all people, had been asked by a friend in Virginia to send him out a clever lad accustomed to ride light weights, wrote to Lord Rockingham: "If poor George Grenville was alive, he would not suffer English jockeys to be entered outwards without bond and certificate: or at least he would have them stamped or excised, to bear the burdens of this poor oppressed country, and to relieve the landed interest." Ten years later the poets of Brooks's Club were still singing of

Grenville's fondness for Hesperian gold;  
And Grenville's friends, conspicuous from afar,  
In mossy down incased and bitter tar.

All the British regiments which had ever sailed from Cork or Portsmouth could not force Americans to purchase British merchandise. Nor was it possible that the presence of troops, under a free constitution such as Massachusetts still enjoyed, should do anything towards the better government of the colony, or the solution of the difficulties which had arisen between the Assembly and the Crown. One function the soldiers might be called upon to discharge; and it was evidently in the minds of the Cabinet which sent them out. As soon as the news of their arrival at Boston had reached London, the supporters of the Ministry, in manifest concert with the Treasury Bench, moved an address to the King praying that persons who, in the view of the Governor of Massachusetts, had committed, or had failed to disclose, acts of treason might be brought over to England and tried under a statute of Henry the Eighth. The Ministers themselves moved resolutions framed with the object of indicating for the Governor's guidance that, in the action which the Assembly of the colony had taken, and in the votes which it had passed, treason had already been committed. Such a proposal was shocking to many independent members of Parliament, and most of all to those who knew by experience what a serious matter a voyage from America was, even in a case where there would be little prospect indeed of a return journey. Thomas Pownall, who had governed Massachusetts strongly and discreetly during Pitt's great war, was earnest in his remonstrances; and his views were enforced by Captain Phipps, afterwards Lord Mulgrave, a competent and experienced navigator. They commented forcibly on the cruelty and injustice of dragging an individual three thousand miles from his family, his friends, and his business, "from every assistance, countenance, comfort, and counsel necessary to support a man under such trying circum-

stances," in order that, with the Atlantic between him and his own witnesses, he might be put to peril of his life before a panel of twelve Englishmen, in no true sense of the word his peers. Of those jurymen the accused person would not possess the personal knowledge which alone could enable him to avail himself of his right to challenge; while they on their side would infallibly regard themselves as brought together to vindicate the law against a criminal of whose guilt the responsible authorities were fully assured, but who would have been dishonestly acquitted by a Boston jury. All this was said in the House of Commons, and listened to most unwillingly by the adherents of the Ministry, who after a while drowned argument by clamour. A large majority voted to establish what was, for all intents and purposes, a new tribunal, to take cognisance of an act which, since it had been committed, had been made a crime by an *ex post facto* decree. Parliament had done this in a single evening, without hearing a tittle of evidence, and, (after a not very advanced stage in the proceedings,) without consenting to hear anything or anybody at all. But a House of Commons, which had so often dealt with Wilkes and the Middlesex electors, had got far beyond the point of caring to maintain a judicial temper over matters affecting the rights, the liberty, and now at last the lives of men.<sup>5</sup>

That which was the sport of a night at Westminster was something very different to those whom it most concerned at Boston. The chiefs of the popular party saw the full extent of their danger in a moment. They already had done what placed their fortunes, and in all probability their very existence, at the mercy of the Governor; and, whether the blow fell soon, or late, or not at all, their peace of mind was gone. To poor men, as most of them were, transportation to England at the best meant ruin. Their one protection, the sympathy of their fellow-citizens, was now powerless to save them. Time was when Governor Bernard would have thought twice before he laid hands on the leaders of public opinion in a country where the arm of authority was strong only when it had public opinion with it. He was not likely to forget how, when

<sup>5</sup> The Government were in a bad House of Commons mess. They could not produce a copy of the alleged treasonable Resolution of the Massachusetts Assembly, on which their own proposals were founded. Governor Pownall, backed by Burke, denied that such a Resolution was in existence. "The chorus-men, who at proper times call for the question, helped them out at this dead lift, by an incessant recitative of the words, 'Question, question, question.' At length, at four o'clock in the morning, the whole House in confusion and laughing, the Resolutions and addresses were agreed to." Such is the account given, in expressive but not very official language, in the *Parliamentary History* for the 26th of January, 1769.



the populace were hanging the Boston stamp distributor in effigy, the civil power requested that the Militia might be called out by beat of drum, and how the colonel replied that his drummers were in the mob. To arrest Samuel Adams and John Hancock, even with their own concurrence, by the aid of such peace officers as cared to respond to a summons, was in the view of the Governor a sufficiently arduous undertaking. And when the time for their deportation came, it would have been a more serious business still to march them, through streets crowded with angry patriots, down to a wharf over the edge of which the crews of half a hundred coasting vessels would have tossed the constables, and the sheriff too, with as little scruple as they would have run a cargo of sugar on a dark night into a creek of Rhode Island. But the troops had come, and the ships which had brought them were never likely to be far away; and that difficulty was a thing of the past. With a quay commanded by the cannon of men-of-war, and a harbour alive with their armed boats, and with a forest of bayonets on land, there would be no fear of a rescue or even of a riot. All prominent opponents of the Government henceforward lived in the knowledge that their fate was at the arbitrary disposal of one whom, as an officer of the State, they had braved and baffled; and who insisted on regarding them, each and all, as his private enemies. The revival of the old Tudor statute, which kept a halter suspended over the neck of every public man whom the people of Massachusetts followed and trusted, was a device as provocative, and in the end proved to be as foolish and as futile, as the operation which in the story of our great civil contest is called, not very accurately, the arrest of the five members.

From the day that the troops landed all chance of a quiet life, for those who valued it, was over and done with. John Adams, who was intent on making a livelihood and who, to use his own words, had very little connection with public affairs, and hoped to have less, observed with disapproval that endeavours were being systematically pursued "by certain busy characters to kindle an immortal hatred between the inhabitants of the lower class and the soldiers." But the fact was that every class, without any prompting from above or below, had its own reasons for disliking the military occupation of their city. Boston was a non-official community, where no man was under orders, and where every man worked every day and all day to get his bread by supplying, in one shape or another, the natural wants and requirements

of the society in which he lived. But now the whole place was invaded by officialism in its most uncompromising and obtrusive form. For every two civilians there was at least one wearer of a uniform, whose only occupations were to draw his pay, to perform his routine duties, and to obey some one who was placed above him. Boston was Whig; and the army, from top to bottom, with few exceptions, was ultra-Tory. Charles Lee, who had served with distinction up to the rank of colonel in a royal regiment,—and with whom royal officers lived, and always continued to live, on free and equal terms,—remembered an occasion when a clever and spirited subaltern inveighed against David Hume as a champion of divine right and absolute monarchy. The young man was taken to task by a veteran who rebuked him for speaking with irreverence of Charles the First, and, with more loyalty than logic, pronounced that such sentiments were indecent and ungrateful in those who ate the King's bread.<sup>6</sup> That was the creed of the mess-room; ominous enough in the days of a sovereign who, now that the Stuarts were no longer a danger to himself, was only too ready to take them for his model.

The social tone of military circles was even more uncongenial to the atmosphere of Boston than their political opinions. That tone has been changing for the better ever since, and never so quickly and so steadily as during the period which covers the career of those who now command our brigades. The British officer of this generation is a picked man to begin with. He enters the army at an age when he has already laid the ground of a liberal education, and in after life he never misses an opportunity of perfecting his professional acquirements. In Indian and colonial service he gains a large and even cosmopolitan view of affairs and men, while he has always present to his mind the obligation to maintain the credit of the country abroad by his personal conduct and demeanour. And, when employed at home, he is accustomed to act with the Militia and Volunteers; to take a share in the work of their organisation and their discipline; to recognise their merits; and to make full allowance for deficiencies from which citizen soldiers can never be exempt in peace, or in the first campaign of a war.

It was a different story with an officer whose lot was cast in the third quarter of the eighteenth century. When on active service in Germany every one, against whom or by whose side he fought, was a regular soldier; and, in the case of our Prussian allies, a regular of the regulars. When he returned to England, to quarters in a Cathedral

<sup>6</sup> *Memoirs of Major-General Lee*. Dublin, 1792. Page 101.

town, (or, if a guardsman, to his lodging in St. James's Street,) he moved in social circles where no single person pursued any one of those work-a-day trades and callings which in New England ranked for as good as the best. With such a training and such associations, a man who possessed no more than the average share of good sense and good feeling cared little for colonial opinion, whether civil or military, and seldom went the right way to conciliate it. Pitt did his best to correct what was amiss; and, when he could lay his hand on a general of the right sort, he did much. Young Lord Howe, who led the advance against Ticonderoga in 1758,—and who in truth, as long as he was alive, commanded the expedition,—tried hard to break down the barrier between the two sections of his army by precept, and by his fine example. But when he was shot dead, skirmishing with Israel Putnam's Rangers in front of his own regiment, the Fifty-fifth of the line, he left no one behind him, south of the St. Lawrence, who had the capacity or inclination to carry out the great Minister's wise and large policy. The relations of royal and provincial officers became anything but fraternal, and the rank and file of the American companies were only too ready to espouse the quarrel of their leaders. American colonels, during the Ticonderoga campaign, complained that they were hardly ever summoned to a council of war, and that, until the orders came out, they knew no more of what was to be done than the sergeants. The men of an American regiment, which was stationed on the Hudson, conceived themselves affronted by an English captain, and nearly half the corps disbanded itself and marched off home. An English Quartermaster-General, great in nothing but oaths,—whom his own Commander-in-Chief described as a very odd man, with whom he was sorry to have any concern,—was told by a Virginian colonel that he would rather break his sword than serve with him any longer. These incidents, when brooded over in winter quarters, engendered a dissatisfaction which found vent in a heated newspaper controversy between London and Boston.

Mr. Parkman, in his fascinating story of "Montcalm and Wolfe," as elsewhere throughout his writings, preserves a carefully measured impartiality of praise and blame towards English and French, regular soldiers and colonial levies, and even Indians; though it cannot be said these last gain, either as men or warriors, by an unvarnished description. He thus speaks about the British officers: "Most of them were men of family, exceedingly prejudiced and insular, whose knowledge of the world was limited to certain classes of their own country-

men, and who looked down on all others, whether foreign or domestic. Towards the provincials their attitude was one of tranquil superiority, though its tranquillity was occasionally disturbed by what they regarded as absurd pretensions on the part of the colony officers. The provincial officers, on the other hand, and especially those of New England, being no less narrow and prejudiced, filled with a sensitive pride and a jealous local patriotism, and bred up in a lofty appreciation of the merits and importance of their country, regarded British superciliousness with a resentment which their strong love for England could not overcome.”<sup>7</sup> There were faults on both sides. But the British officers had the most to give; and, if they had cordially and cheerfully taken their cue from spirits as finely touched as those of Wolfe and Howe, their advances towards intimacy with their American comrades would have been eagerly met and their friendship warmly valued.

If there was so little sense of fellowship between the regular army and the colonists during the Seven Years’ War, when they were serving together in the field against a common adversary, it may well be believed that in 1772 and 1773 things did not go pleasantly in the streets of Boston. The garrison was there, in order to remind the city that Britain’s arm was long and heavy and that her patience was exhausted. It was a situation without hope from the very first; for it gave no opportunity for the play of kindly impulses, and was only too certain to bring into prominence the least estimable persons on either side. There were men of refinement and good education in the British regiments, and on the staff, more especially among those of older standing, who would gladly have employed their social gifts to mitigate the asperity of politics. There were, as the sequel proved, some of all ranks and ages who had studied the case of the colonists closely enough to question and condemn the action of their own Government. And there were veterans who had fought the enemies of their country bravely all the world over, without being able to hate them, and who were still less inclined to be harsh towards those whom they regarded as her erring children. But the winter of discontent was so severe that Uncle Toby himself could not have melted the ice in a Boston parlour. The men of the popular party, and the women quite as rigidly, set their faces like flint against any show of civility, or the most remote approach to familiarity. The best among the officers, forbidden by self-respect to intrude where they were not welcome, retired into the back-

<sup>7</sup> Parkman’s *Montcalm and Wolfe*, chapter xxi.



ground, and left the field clear for the operations of certain black-sheep of the mess-room, whom the citizens, in the humour which then prevailed, came not unnaturally to look upon as representatives of British character and conduct.

That sort of military man, as readers of the English classics know, appeared frequently in the dramas and novels of the eighteenth century; where his self-sufficiency and impertinence were unsparingly castigated, although he was sometimes endowed with a sprightliness of which in real life little trace could be found. The recruiting officer who travelled with Mr. Spectator on his return from the visit to Sir Roger de Coverley; the ensign who insulted Tom Jones; the captain whom Roderick Random met in the Bath coach,—were of a type which long ago became extinct in our army. But of old days that type was much in evidence, as many a quiet and inoffensive person everywhere, but especially in the colonies, knew to his cost. For, when these gentlemen disported themselves in American society, they were in the habit of parading a supreme disdain for every one who did not wear a uniform. To all such they applied indiscriminately the name of “Mohairs,” an epithet which still rankled in the mind of many a brave man after he had worn to tatters more than one uniform while fighting against the cause to which the services of these reprobates were so great a discredit and so small a gain.<sup>8</sup> In undisturbed times, and in cities against which the Government that employed them did not bear a grudge, their contempt for civilians found expression in acts of buffoonery, the victims of which were cautiously but not always judiciously chosen. A Philadelphian writer of the period relates the feats of a pair of officers who made themselves notorious by a series of practical jokes, marked with scanty fun and great impudence, and directed against citizens of pacific appearance and occupations. At length the worst of the two happened to mistake his man, and received a lesson which he was not likely soon to forget.

The nature of such pranks, when their perpetrators were sober, give some faint indication of what they permitted themselves in their hours of conviviality; for those were days when to drink more than was good for him,—or indeed more than would have been good for himself and his neighbours on either side of him,—was a duty which no one could decline except a man of unusual resolution, or of a grade in the army higher than any which these worthies were ever likely to attain. Mackrabie, who between 1768 and 1770 was made much at home in

<sup>8</sup> Garden's *Revolutionary Anecdotes*.

the garrisons of America, was very candid in keeping his brother-in-law informed of the price which he paid for the privilege. "We have been most hospitably and genteelly entertained," he writes from Fort Pitt, (as Fort Duquesne had been styled ever since it fell into British hands,) "and allowing for the *politesse à la militaire* which obliges us to compound for being *un peu enivrés* at least once a day, we pass our time most agreeably." On the fourth of June at New York he anticipates that the General, as a matter of course, will make all the officers in the town drunk at his house in honour of the King's birthday. In another letter he gives a description of serenading, as practised in Philadelphia. "The manner is as follows. We with four or five young officers of the regiment in barracks drink as hard as we can, to keep out the cold, and about midnight sally forth, attended by the band,—horns, clarinets, hautboys, and bassoons,—march through the streets, and play under the window of any lady you choose to distinguish, which they esteem a high compliment." In 1770, when feeling was already so hot that a good Englishman should have been careful to evince his loyalty to the King by courtesy and forbearance towards the King's subjects, he was invited to join in celebrating St. George's Day at a banquet attended by all the native-born Englishmen in the city. "We should have had," he writes, "the Governor at our head, but that the party was only proposed two days before. However, we met at a tavern, stuffed roast beef and plum pudding, and got drunk, *pour l'honneur de St. George*; wore crosses, and finished the evening at the play-house, where we made the people all chorus 'God save the King,' and 'Rule Britannia,' and 'Britons strike home,' and such like nonsense, and, in short, conducted ourselves with all the decency and confusion usual on such occasions."<sup>9</sup>

Those manners, unrebuked and even tacitly encouraged in high military quarters, were not likely to win back the affections of a community which still walked in the footsteps of its early founders. Mr. Thomas Hollis,—a learned English antiquary, and an enterprising art-collector, with the success which falls to him who is early in that field,—had been a munificent benefactor to American colleges, and most of all to Harvard. He maintained with the leading scholars and divines of America very close relations of friendship, of good offices, and, whenever the opportunity offered itself, of hospitality. Indeed, his position in reference to New England was very much that of the Proxenus

<sup>9</sup> Mackrabie to Francis, Fort Pitt, 14th July, 1770; New York, 4th June, 1768; Philadelphia, 9th March, 1768; Philadelphia, 24th April, 1770.

of a foreign State in the cities of ancient Greece. He knew the colonists of old; and, if the Ministry had consulted him, he could have put them into communication with informants and advisers of a higher stamp than the broken-down office-holders and subsidised news-writers who were their confidential correspondents across the ocean. "The people of Boston and Massachusetts Bay," so Hollis wrote within a month of the day that the troops sailed for America, "are, I suppose, take them as a body, the soberest, most knowing, virtuous people at this time upon earth. All of them hold Revolution principles, and were to a man, till disgusted by the Stamp Act, the staunchest friends to the house of Hanover." There was a seriousness, he went on to say, in their conversation and deportment which in the more ribald public prints had obtained for them the appellation of Boston Saints; and, like the saints of old, they now had a taste of persecution. Although physical cruelty was absent, they endured something of martyrdom in the moral repugnance created by the license and the rioting with which their much-enduring town was thenceforward flooded. It is not difficult to imagine the feelings of a quiet family, who had never heard music outside the chapel of their own connection, when they were treated to a military serenade after the style of Philadelphia; knowing only too well that, if the ladies of the house were suspected of liking the entertainment, they would wake up some morning to find their front door tarred and feathered.

For they were not all saints in Boston. In the alleys which ran down to the water-side there were as rough men of their hands as in any seaport in the world; ardent patriots all of them, (with the exception of a very few who took excellent care to keep their sentiments to themselves,) and vigilant censors and guardians, after their own fashion, of the patriotism of others. Unfortunately these were the inhabitants of Boston who came most closely and frequently in contact with the rank and file of the British army. It was a pity that there should have been so deep and impassable a gulf of misunderstanding between two sets of people who had much in common, whose interests were in no point adverse, and whose attitude of reciprocal enmity was imposed upon them from above. None who are widely read in military memoirs,—and there is no nation more rich in the journals of privates and non-commissioned officers than our own,—can doubt that the men of Minden, like the men of Salamanca and Vittoria, were as honest, humane, and (under the ordinary temptations and trials of military life) as well-conducted soldiers as ever carried a sick comrade's knap-

sack or shared their rations with a starving peasant. But they knew very well that their presence in Boston was not meant as a delicate attention to the city, and that to make themselves disagreeable to its citizens was part of the unwritten order of the day. Any compunction that they might have harboured was soon extinguished by the inexorable hostility which met them at every step, and hemmed them in from every quarter. If they had been a legion of angels under Gabriel and Michael they would have been just as much and as little beloved in Fish Street or in Battery Marsh. Their good qualities were denied or travestied, their faults spied out and magnified. Men who during Pitt's war never tired of standing treat with soldiers, now talked of them as idle drunkards. If they civilly passed the time of day to a woman, she drew herself aside with a shudder. The very colour of the cloth in which, in order that America might be safe and great, Englishmen had struggled through the surf at Louisburg, and scrambled up the heights of Abraham, was made for them a by-word and a reproach. No single circumstance was employed with such great injustice, but so much effect, to excite disgust and derision as one condition in their professional existence which, poor fellows, was no fault of theirs. The custom of flogging, (and that punishment, in the case of a heavy sentence, might well mean death by the most horrible of tortures,) revolted, sometimes beyond all power of repression, the humanity of the populations among whom our troops were quartered, and of the allies with whom they served. This feeling was strong in America, where the sense of personal dignity and inviolability was more deeply rooted than in Europe; and it found expression in a savage nickname which, as the event showed, a man with a loaded musket in his hand, all the more because he was respectable, might find himself unable tamely to endure.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> During the later period of the war a young colonist, hardly more than a boy, deserted from Colonel Tarleton's corps in the royal army. He was sentenced to a thousand lashes, and died under them. On one occasion an American sentinel saw a red coat on the opposite bank of a river and gave the alarm. On closer inspection it was discovered to be the cast-off uniform of a British soldier, who had been flogged with such severity that "his lacerated back would admit of no covering."

The shock to the popular sentiment became more intense, as time went on, both at home and on the Continent. During the war with Napoleon a battalion which had suffered terribly from illness in the West Indies, and was going out to suffer terribly at Walcheren, was quartered at Ripon in Yorkshire. A soldier was severely flogged. Several of his comrades fainted in the ranks; and the inhabitants, who had with difficulty been restrained by a cordon of sentries from rushing in upon the scene of execution, pelted the regiment on the way back to barracks. After Salamanca, as an episode of the triumphal entry into Madrid, a culprit received eight hundred lashes, inflicted by the strongest



Boston through its constituted authorities met the invasion with passive, but most effective and irritating, resistance. The Colonels called upon the Council to house and feed their men, and were reminded that under the statute the city was not bound to provide quarters or supplies until the barracks in the Castle were full; and the Council and the Colonels alike knew that the regiments had been sent, not to defend the Castle, but to occupy and annoy the city. General Gage, the Commander-in-Chief in America, came on from New York to find his soldiers sleeping in tents on the Common, with a New England winter rapidly approaching. He tried his best to insist that billets should be found for them; but the law was against him, in a country where, as he sulkily remarked, the law was studied by everybody. There was nothing for it but to hire private houses at exorbitant rates, and supply the wants of the troops through the agency of the Commissariat and at the expense of the British Treasury.

The soldiers were now in the heart of the town, with nothing to do except to clean their accoutrements, to mount guard in public places which, before they came, had been as peaceful as Berkeley Square, and to pick quarrels with the townsmen, who on their side were not slow to take up the challenge. Every man fought his hardest with the weapons which were most familiar to him. Samuel Adams argued in a series of published letters that it was illegal in time of peace, without the consent of Parliament, to keep up a standing army; and that Americans, who were not represented in Parliament, were therefore suffering under a military tyranny. British officers spoke and wrote their minds about the treatment to which they had been subjected in consequence of the hostility of the citizens, and the Grand Jury found bills against them for slandering the city of Boston. A captain, who bade his men remember, if a hand were laid on them, that they wore side-arms, and that side-arms were meant for use, was called upon to answer before the tribunals for the words which he had uttered. Humbler and ruder people in either camp followed the lead of their superi-

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drummers and buglers in the brigade. The people of the city crowded about the sufferer, and would have loaded him with money if he had been allowed to take it. A German rifleman in the British service has left an account of the operations near Alicante in 1813. "The inhabitants," he says, "had never had an opportunity of witnessing an English military punishment, and the flogging of an artilleryman made a considerable impression on them. They cut down the fig-tree to which he had been tied, and even grubbed up the roots."

*American Anecdotes*, vol. i., pp. 74 and 399. *The Vicissitudes of a Soldier's Life*, by John Green, late of the 68th Durham Light Infantry, chapters ii. and x. *Adventures of a Young Rifleman*, London, 1826, chapter viii.

ors; and during eighteen months insult and provocation were rife in the air, and the street was seldom free for long together from rough play which at any moment might turn into bloody work. On the evening of the 5th of March, 1770, there came a short and sharp collision between a handful of soldiers and a small crowd, voluble in abuse, and too free with clubs and snowballs. There was a sputter of musketry, and five or six civilians dropped down dead or dying. That was the Boston massacre. The number of killed was the same as, half a century afterwards, fell in St. Peter's Fields at Manchester. It was not less certain that American Independence must result from the one catastrophe than that English Parliamentary Reform would result from the other; and in each case the inevitable consequence took just the same period of time to become an accomplished fact of history.

It would be as idle to apportion the shares of blame among the immediate actors in the miserable business as to speculate on the amount of the responsibility for an explosion which attached itself to an artilleryman whose officer had sent him into a magazine to fill cartridges by the light of an open candle. Of the high parties concerned, the popular leaders hastened to put themselves in the right, and to prove that the extemporised statesmanship of plain folk might be better than anything which Privy Councillors, and Lord Chancellors present and expectant, had to show. Their first care was to get the soldiers out of the town; and for this humane and public-spirited object they availed themselves deftly, and most justifiably, of the apprehension aroused in the minds of the British authorities by an outburst of wrath such as no American city had hitherto witnessed. All that night the drums were rolling, and the bells clashing, and the streets resounding with the cry of "Town-born, turn out, turn out!" The population was on foot, armed and angry; and no one went home to bed until the troops had been ordered back to barracks, and the captain who had commanded the party of soldiers in the fatal affray was in custody of the Sheriff, and under examination before the magistrates. Next morning there was a public meeting, attended by almost every able-bodied man in Boston, and by the first comers of the multitudes which all day long streamed in from the surrounding country. There was no bloodshed, no outrage, no violence even of language. After a prayer for the divine blessing, at which any opponent who liked was at liberty to laugh, a committee of citizens was gravely chosen, and charged with the duty of providing, according to the best of their judgment, for the common safety. Samuel Adams, Warren, and Hancock, with their col-

leagues, on the one side, and the Lieutenant-Governor surrounded by his Council and the chief officers of the Army and Navy on the other, talked it out through the livelong day. There were adjournments for the purpose of affording the representatives of the Crown an opportunity to confer privately among themselves, and of enabling the delegates to make their report to the people, who sate in continuous session, or stood over the whole space between their own hall of meeting and the State-house in vast and ever-increasing numbers. It was a hard tussle; but fresh arguments, which required no marshalling or commenting, were coming in from the neighbouring townships by hundreds every hour. The ominous prospect of the night which was likely to follow such a day clenched the discussion; and just before dark a promise was given that the whole military force should be removed to the Castle, and three miles of salt water should be placed between the troops and the townspeople.

Danger to public peace was for the moment averted; but there still remained a matter which touched the public reputation. The soldiers who had pulled the triggers were to be tried for their lives; and Captain Preston, who had ordered them to fire without the sanction of a civil magistrate, would have been in peril even if local opinion had been neutral or quiescent. Moved by a happy inspiration he applied to John Adams and Josiah Quincy to defend him. Quincy was a young man, eloquent for liberty, who had begun to play a great part when his career was cut short by death at the exact point when the war of words passed into the war of bullets.<sup>11</sup> His father, whom he loved and respected, wrote to dissuade him from accepting the brief, in terms of vehement remonstrance. The reply, it has been truly said, was in the vein which sometimes raises the early annals of the American Revolution above the ordinary level of history. "To inquire my duty," the son wrote, "and to do it, is my aim. I dare affirm that you and this whole people will one day rejoice that I became an advocate for the aforesaid criminals, charged with the murder of our fellow-citizens." Adams, some years the older, and with more to lose, had the watchful and jealous eyes of an exasperated people fixed on him with concentrated intensity. Long afterwards, at the age of eighty-two, he wrote in answer to the inquiry of a friend: "Nothing but want of interest and patronage prevented me from enlisting in the army. Could I have obtained a troop of horse or a company of foot, I should in-

<sup>11</sup> Adams heard the news of Josiah Quincy's death on the 30th April, 1775, eleven days after Lexington.

fallibly have been a soldier. It is a problem in my mind, to this day, whether I should have been a coward or a hero." As far as physical danger went he showed, on more than one occasion, that he could not resist the temptation of a fight even at times when his first duty towards his country was to keep himself alive and whole. And as regards moral courage, no finer proof was ever given than when he undertook the defence of Captain Preston, and secured a verdict of acquittal by the exercise of an enormous industry and the display of splendid ability.

A trial so conducted, and with such a result, was a graceful and a loyal act on the part of the colony; and the mother-country should not have been behindhand to meet it in the same spirit. The moment was eminently favourable for a complete and permanent reconciliation. On the very day that the shots were fired at Boston Lord North, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, rose in the House of Commons to move the repeal of the duties levied in America under Charles Townshend's Act, with the solitary exception of the duty upon tea. The maintenance of that impost had caused a division of opinion in the Cabinet, as acute and defined as ever took place without then and there breaking up a Ministry. The Duke of Grafton, who still was the titular Head of the Government, had only just arrived at the age when the modern world begins to look for discretion in a public man. His fatal luck had made him Prime Minister at thirty, with the training of a London rake, and married most unhappily, though not worse than he at the time deserved. He had been a novice in statecraft under a royal master who had a policy, while he himself had none. For the crown of his misfortune, his faults and follies were denounced to his contemporaries, and blazoned forth for the wonder of posterity, by two past masters in the art of invective. Grafton's critic in Parliament was Edmund Burke, the greatest man of letters who has given all his best literary powers to politics. And in the public press he was assailed by Junius, as keen a politician as ever employed literature for the instrument of his righteous indignation.

The lesson was sharp. Grafton had taken it to heart, and was now intent on shaking off his old self and doing what he could to redeem his unhappy past. His reputation in the eyes of history was already beyond mending. Burke and Junius had seen to that. But it was open for him to clear his conscience, and he now took the first step towards that end, the importance of which he was man enough to estimate at



its true value. He earnestly recommended the Cabinet to sacrifice a trumpery tax which brought into the Treasury a net income of three hundred pounds. The retention of it cost the country directly at least five thousand times as much money on account of the refusal on the part of the colonies to purchase British products; and indirectly—in the shape of distrust and ill-will, scandals and disturbances, military preparations and national dangers—an account was being run up on the wrong side of the ledger, the ultimate total of which no man could calculate. He was supported by every member of the Cabinet whose character stood high, or who had served with distinction in civil life, in the field, or on deep water. Lord Camden was with Grafton and so were General Conway and Lord Granby. The famous admiral, Sir Edward Hawke, kept away by illness, would otherwise have voted on the same side. Against him were the Lords Rochford, and Gower, and Weymouth, and Hillsborough,—a list of personages who, (except that some of them were noted as hard-livers in a generation when such pre-eminence was not easily won,) have been preserved from oblivion by the mischief which on this unique occasion they had the opportunity of doing. Shelburne had already been driven from the Ministry, or Grafton would have carried the day; but the casting vote now lay with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and he gave his voice for retaining the tax out of deference to the King, and against his own view of his own duty.

George the Third had dictated North's line of action; but North had to explain it himself in Parliament. On the necessity of reconciling America he spoke cogently, and with a depth of feeling which impressed his audience. Then he approached the ungracious part of his task, and defended the continuation of the Tea-duty perfunctorily and far from persuasively. Conway argued for the repeal of the entire Act, as did Barré and Sir William Meredith. All men of sense were united in thinking that it was the occasion for a complete and final settlement, and not for a compromise. George Grenville exposed in trenchant terms the folly and inconsequence of a course for which, though he was regarded on both sides of the ocean as the apostle of colonial taxation, he flatly refused to stultify himself by voting. At one moment it looked as if the House of Commons would take the matter into its own hands, and would inflict on the Ministers a defeat most acceptable to all members of the Government who had any notion how to govern. But, when the division came, the Tea-duty was retained by a

majority of sixty-two. The King's friends had been duly warned, and primed, and mustered to do the King's work; and never did they more richly earn the unanimity of condemnation which has been awarded to them by historians whose verdict has weight and whose names are held in honour.

The concession was partial and grudging; but the good effect which even so it produced showed that a frank and complete renunciation of claims which were hateful to America and worse than unprofitable to England would have reunited the two countries in sincere and lasting friendship. New York, which had observed her engagement to exclude British goods more faithfully than any other colony, and whose trade had suffered in proportion, now withdrew from the agreement, and sent orders home for all sorts of merchandise, except tea. On New Year's day, 1771, Dr. Cooper wrote to Franklin from Boston: "You will hear, before this reaches you, of the acquittal of Captain Preston and the soldiers concerned in the action of the 5th of March. Instead of meeting with any unfair or harsh treatment, they had every advantage that could possibly be given them in a court of justice. The agreement of the merchants is broken. Administration has a fair opportunity of adopting the mildest and most prudent measures respecting the colonies, without the appearance of being threatened and drove." At home the Ministry would have been cordially supported in a policy of indulgence and consideration by the commercial men of the entire Kingdom. And with good reason; for the very best which possibly could be done for British commerce was to leave well alone. Jealousy of America was the sentiment of politicians who thought that they understood trade better than the traders themselves, and was not shared by men who knew business from the inside, and who lived by the pursuit of it. Burke was a man of business in every respect, except that he applied his knowledge and insight to the profit of the nation instead of his own. It had been finely said that he worked as hard and as continuously at commercial questions as if he was to receive a handsome percentage on the commerce of the whole Empire. He now replied with crushing force to the chief of the amateur economists whose happiness was poisoned by the fear of American competition. "He tells us that their seas are covered with ships, and their rivers floating with commerce. This is true; but it is with *our* ships that the seas are covered, and their rivers float with British commerce. The American merchants are our factors; all in reality, most even in name." According to

Burke,<sup>12</sup> the Americans traded, navigated, and cultivated with English capital, working for the profit of Englishmen, and taking nothing for themselves, "except the *peculium*, without which even slaves will not labour."

In the production and fabrication of goods it was not a question of rivalry, but of a practical monopoly for British mills and foundries which nothing could break down; unless the meddling of British public men should irritate the colonists into taking measures to supply their own wants by their own industry. The colonies, according to Franklin, possessed no manufactures of any consequence. "In Massachusetts a little coarse woollen only, made in families for their own wear. Glass and linen have been tried, and failed. Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New York much the same. Pennsylvania has tried a linen manufactory, but it is dropped, it being imported cheaper. There is a glass house in Lancaster County, but it makes only a little coarse ware for the country neighbours. Maryland is clothed all with English manufactures. Virginia the same, except that in their families they spin a little cotton of their own growing. South Carolina and Georgia none. All speak of the dearness of labour, that makes manufactures impracticable." That was the state of things before the non-importation agreement. After it had been in force a year, a single town in Massachusetts had made eighty thousand pairs of women's shoes, and was sending them to the Southern colonies, and even to the West Indies.<sup>13</sup> Franklin never wearied of preaching that advantageous circumstances will always secure and fix manufactures, so long as things are allowed to take and keep their natural course. "Sheffield," he exclaimed, "against all Europe these hundred years past!" And it would have been Sheffield and Manchester and Burslem and Birmingham against all Europe, and against all America too, long enough for every living manufacturer who had his wits about him to make his fortune, if only George the Third and his Ministers had known when and where it was wise to do nothing. The satisfaction with which Englishmen, who had a business connection with America, regarded a sit-

<sup>12</sup> *Observations on a late publication intituled "The Present State of the Nation,"* 1769. The motto to Burke's pamphlet, taken from Ennius, was happily chosen.

"O Tite, si quid ego adjuvero, curamque levasso,  
Quæ nunc te coquit, et versat sub pectore fixa,  
Ecquid erit pretii?"

Titus was Mr. George Grenville.

<sup>13</sup> *Franklin Correspondence*, March 13, 1768, and August 3, 1769.

uation which, as far as their own interests were concerned, nothing could improve, was clearly indicated by the dead silence into which on this side of the Atlantic the American controversy had fallen. During the whole of 1771, and the two following years, no debate on any matter connected with that question is reported in the Parliamentary History of England.<sup>14</sup> The Historical Summary in the "Annual Register" for 1773 gives to America less than a single column of printed matter. In the Historical Summary for 1775 American affairs fill a hundred and forty-two out of a hundred and fifty-eight pages.

It was not otherwise beyond the water. The colonies generally acquiesced in an arrangement under which they enjoyed present tranquillity, even though it was founded on the admission of a principle containing the germ of future discord. New England was no exception. "The people," wrote Mr. Johnson of Connecticut, a trustworthy and cool-headed servant of the public, "appear to be weary of their altercations with the mother-country. A little discreet conduct on both sides would perfectly re-establish that warm affection and respect towards Great Britain for which this country was once so remarkable." Even with regard to Massachusetts the Governor, who made the worst of everything, reported in September, 1771, that there was a disposition to let the quarrel subside.

But one perennial source of discomfort and disorder remained in full operation. The Revenue laws were in those days ill obeyed and worse liked all the Empire over; and it was extremely difficult to enforce them. Communication by land and sea was not on system, and traffic and travel were conducted along numerous and ever-varying channels by the agency of rough and ready men. The police was insufficient and badly organised; and, above all, the State, when demanding its dues, had the mass of the community against it. From the peers and members of Parliament who walked ashore at Dover, with three embroidered suits of silk and satin worn one inside another, down to the poor wives in the Kent and Sussex villages who drank their smuggled Dutch tea laced with smuggled French brandy, the Custom-house had no partisans, and few contributors except under stern compulsion. Nobody had a good word for it except honest or timid traders whose market was spoiled by illicit dealing; or moralists who preached abstinence from smuggling as a counsel of protection, the

<sup>14</sup> In the session of 1772, (to be quite accurate,) during the progress of the Annual Mutiny Bill through the House of Commons a few words were said about Court Martials in America.



observance of which placed a man out of the reach of temptation to graver crimes. The position is clearly laid down by Franklin. "There are those in the world who would not wrong a neighbour, but make no scruple of cheating the King. The reverse, however, does not hold; for whoever scruples cheating the King will certainly not wrong his neighbour."

In the three kingdoms practice was everywhere lax; while in many districts the population lived by smuggling as generally, and almost as openly, as Lancashire lived by spinning. The Mr. Holroyd, who was afterwards Lord Sheffield, complained to Arthur Young in 1771 that want of hands cramped the agriculture of Sussex. "All the lively able young men are employed in smuggling. They can have a guinea a week as riders and carriers without any risk. Therefore it is not to be expected that they will labour for eight shillings." Lord Holland's country seat lay between Broadstairs and Margate, across the top of a pathway which led from the beach of a convenient inlet between two chalk headlands. A party of coastguardsmen inhabit the house, now that they are less wanted. According to George Selwyn, all Lord Holland's servants were professed smugglers; and Selwyn's own servant made a profit by taking contraband goods off their hands. Lord Carlisle sat on a special Commission as the representative of his country at a moment when she was going into war with half the civilised world because the Americans would not pay the Tea-duty. Not many years before his Lordship's town-mansion had been beset by Custom-house officers. It appeared that Lady Carlisle's chairman, like the rest of his fraternity, used to employ his leisure, when the London season was over and he was no longer on duty between the poles, in landing tea surreptitiously from the ships in the river.<sup>15</sup> Lord Dartmouth had a correspondent in Cornwall who from time to time gave him information about what was going on in a part of the world which lay a great deal nearer home than the shores of Maine and New Hampshire. "I am concerned in the wine trade," this gentleman wrote, "and between myself and partners we have a considerable capital in the trade; but on account of the smuggling on every side of us, and our rivals in trade doing such things as I trust our consciences ever will start back from with abhorrence, we hardly make common interest of our money." Lisbon wine, he goes on to say, which no honest merchant could import at less than four shillings a gallon, was sold

<sup>15</sup> *Historical Manuscripts Commission*. Fifteenth Report, Appendix, Part VI. Pp. 273 and 297 of the *Carlisle Papers*.

throughout the county for half a crown. Rum, which had paid duty, did not reimburse the importer at less than nine shillings; but everybody who wanted to drink it was able to buy it at five. The tobaccoists would purchase with circumstances of great ostentation one pound of duty-paid tobacco, and under cover of that transaction would sell twenty pounds which had been smuggled over from Guernsey.

The officers of the Revenue were overmatched by sea and land. Sixty horses, each carrying a hundredweight and a half of tea, had been seen traversing Cornwall in bright moonlight to supply the wants of Devonshire. When conveying their goods across country the contraband traders did the law so much compliment as to confine their operations to the night; but any hour of the day was a business hour for the large Irish wherries, (as they then were called,) which infested the Cornish coast. A Revenue cutter stationed to the south of Tintagel Head was chased by one of these smugglers. The King's vessel took refuge in Padstow harbour, and her adversary hung out a flag, and fired a salvo of seven guns in honour of the victory. That was the condition of an English county which had forty-four representatives in Parliament to look after its interests and its proprieties. It was almost pharisaical for Ministers, with such a state of things at their own doors, to maintain that public morality demanded of them to set fleets and armies in motion because the Revenue was defrauded, and its officers flouted, in half-settled regions on the outskirts of the Empire.<sup>16</sup>

It undoubtedly was the case that in America, and most of all in New England, enmity to the claims of the Revenue was active and universal. The origin of that enmity lay far back in history. It has been observed by a writer, who knew his subject well, that the part which the merchants and shipowners of the Northern colonies played in the contest with the home Government has been understated both as regards the importance of their action and the breadth and justice of the motives by which it was inspired.<sup>17</sup> They had been born into the inheritance of a cruel wrong, which was more deeply felt as the forces that govern trade came to be better understood, and in some cases were for the first time discovered. Cromwell, with an insight beyond his age, had refused to swathe and swaddle the infant commerce of America; and under the Commonwealth that commerce grew fast

<sup>16</sup> William Rawlins to the Earl of Dartmouth, August 26, 1765, from St. Columb. Again, from the same to the same, April 24, 1775, from Padstow. *Historical Manuscripts Commission*. Fifteenth Report, Appendix, Part I.

<sup>17</sup> *Loyalists of the American Revolution*, by Lorenzo Sabine, vol. i., pp. 3 to 14.

towards prosperous maturity. But a Stuart was no sooner on the throne than the British Parliament entered on a course of selfish legislation which killed the direct maritime trade between our dependencies and foreign ports, and (to borrow the words of an eminent historian) deliberately crushed every form of colonial manufacture which could possibly compete with the manufactures of England.<sup>18</sup>

The traditional resentment against such injustice kept alive by the continuing and ever-increasing material injury which it inflicted, arrayed men of all classes, creeds, and parties in opposition to the interests of the Exchequer, and to the officers by whom these interests were guarded. A gentleman of New York says in a letter written shortly after the American Revolution broke out: "I fix all the blame of these proceedings on the Presbyterians. You would ask whether no Church of England people were among them. Yes, there were; to their eternal shame be it spoken. But in general they were interested either as smugglers of tea, or as being overburdened with dry goods they knew not how to pay for."<sup>19</sup> Thomas Hancock—the uncle of John Hancock, to whom, oblivious of political divergences, he left most of his property—was an ardent royalist and a declared Tory. He was reputed to be worth that comfortable amount of money which his contemporaries, in the phrase used by Pope and Arbuthnot, still called a plum. Hancock had made the better part of his fortune by importing contraband tea from Holland, and supplying it to the mess-tables of the army and navy. Considering that it was to people holding his political opinions that the Crown lawyers would resort if they had occasion to pack a jury, it is not difficult to compute their chances of securing a conviction on a charge of evading the Revenue. Whenever a gauger or tide-waiter was found tripping, the Court-house overflowed in every quarter with triumphant emotion. About the period of Preston's trial, John Adams argued a suit for a penalty against a Custom-house officer for taking greater fees than those allowed by law; and, in his own estimation, he argued it very indifferently. He won his case; and in the enthusiasm of the moment, somewhat to his amusement and yet more to his disgust, he was overwhelmed with assurances that he had

<sup>18</sup> Mr. Lecky, in the twelfth chapter of his *History*, treats of the commercial relations between England and the American colonies. Within the compass of four pages he gives a description of their character and consequences which is clear, full, and unanswerable.

<sup>19</sup> American Archives, prepared and published under authority of an Act of Congress. The letter is dated May 31, 1774.

outdone all his own previous efforts, and would thenceforward rank as an equal of the greatest orator that ever spoke in Rome or Athens.

For ten years past, ever since George Grenville's influence began to be felt in the distant parts of the Empire, the claims of the Revenue had been enforced with unwonted rigour, which in the summer of 1771 assumed an aggressive and exasperating character. Sandwich, who had succeeded Hawke at the Admiralty, had appointed an officer with his own surname, and (as it is superfluous to state) of his own party, to command the powerful squadron now stationed in American waters. Admiral Montagu, who came fresh from hearing the inner mind of the Bedfords as expressed in the confidence of the punch-bowl, was always ready to make known his opinion of New England and its inhabitants in epithets which, on a well-ordered man-of-war, were seldom heard abaft the mast. In comparison with him, (so it was said,) an American freeholder living in a log-house twenty feet square, was a well-bred and polite man. To make matters worse, the Admiral's lady was as much too fine as the Admiral himself was coarse. "She is very full," wrote Adams, "of her remarks at the assembly and the concert. 'Can this lady afford the jewels and dresses she wears?' 'Oh, that my son should come to dance with a mantua-maker!'" Between them they encouraged, in those officers whom their example swayed, a tone of arrogance and incivility foreign indeed to a noble service.<sup>20</sup>

The Navy, like every profession, has its bad bargains; and the lieutenant in command of the schooner *Gaspee*, which was watching the coast of Rhode Island, set himself to the task of translating the language used on the quarter-deck of the flagship into overt acts. He stopped and searched vessels without adequate pretext, seized goods illegally, and fired at the market boats as they entered Newport harbour. He treated the farmers on the islands much as the Saracens in the middle ages treated the coast population of Italy, cutting down

<sup>20</sup> The Admiral's appearance was milder than his language. Philip Freneau, in a satirical Litany, prayed to be delivered

"From groups at St. James's, who slight our petitions,  
And fools that are waiting for further submissions;  
From a nation whose manners are rough and abrupt;  
From scoundrels and rascals whom gold can corrupt;  
From pirates sent out by command of the King  
To murder and plunder, but never to swing;  
From hot-headed Montagu, mighty to swear,  
The little fat man with his pretty white hair."

It was believed in America that Sandwich and the Admiral were brothers. The story, in that shape, has got into history.



their trees for fuel, and taking their sheep when his crew ran short of fresh meat. The injured parties made their voices heard; and the case was laid before the Admiral, who approved the conduct of his subordinate officer, and announced that, as sure as any people from Newport attempted to rescue a vessel, he would hang them as pirates. It was a foolish answer as addressed to men who were not long-suffering, nor particular as to their methods of righting a grievance. The Admiral's allusion to the gallows, and possibly the character of Lieutenant Dudingston's depredations, put them in mind of an old proverb; and they resolved that, if it came to a hanging matter, it should be for a sheep, and not for a lamb. At the first convenient opportunity they boarded the royal schooner, set the crew on shore, and burned the vessel to the water's edge. A terrible commotion followed. Thurlow, in his capacity as Attorney-General, denounced the crime as of a deeper dye than piracy, and reported that the whole business was of five times the magnitude of the Stamp Act. By a royal order in council the authorities of Rhode Island were commanded to deliver the culprits into the hands of the Admiral, with a view to their being tried in London. But before the crew of a Providence fishing-boat could be arraigned at the Old Bailey, and hanged in chains in the Essex marshes, they had first to be got out of Narragansett Bay; and Stephen Hopkins, the old Chief Justice of Rhode Island, refused to lend his sanction to their arrest in face of the destiny which awaited them. Admiral Montagu himself, right for once, acknowledged that British Acts of Parliament—at any rate such Acts as the revived statute of Henry the Eighth—would never go down in America unless forced by the point of the sword. And the estimable and amiable Dartmouth, who now was Secretary of the Colonies, contrived to hush up a difficulty which, as he was told by a wise and friendly correspondent, if it had been pressed to an extreme issue "would have set the continent into a fresh flame."<sup>21</sup>

It was too much to expect that Sandwich and Thurlow would sit quiet under their defeat. There was no use in having the law, good or bad, on their side if those who interpreted and administered it in America were independent of their influence and dictation. But the members of that Cabinet were never slow to make up a prescription for anything which they regarded as a disease in the body politic; and, as usual, they tried it first on Massachusetts. It was arranged that her

<sup>21</sup> *Dartmouth Correspondence*, August 29, 1772, and June 16, 1773. *Historical Manuscripts Commission*. Fourteenth Report, Appendix, Part X.

judges should henceforward have their salaries paid by the Crown, and not by the Colony. Samuel Adams discerned the threatening nature of the proposal itself, and foresaw all the perils involved in the principle which lay beneath it. At his instigation the patriots of Boston invited all the townships of the province to establish Committees of Correspondence for the purpose of guarding their chartered rights, and adjured every legislative body throughout America to aid them in repelling an invasion which, if it succeeded in their own case, undoubtedly would be directed in turn against all their neighbours. Massachusetts rose to the call; and the Assembly of Virginia, with the political instinct which seldom misled it, took prompt and courageous action. But in other quarters the response was neither hearty nor universal. The spirit which had defeated the Stamp Act could not be aroused at short notice and on a partial issue: and friends and adversaries alike knew that the threatened colony, if things came to the worst, must be prepared to rely mainly upon herself.

There was, however, good reason to doubt whether the mother-country was in the temper to fight so paltry a matter to such a bitter end. England, outside Parliament and within it, was tired of bullying and coercing men who after all were Englishmen, whose case rested on honoured English precedents, and was asserted and maintained by honest English methods. Never was a community, (as the men of Massachusetts pathetically complained,) so long and so pitilessly assailed with malicious abuse as theirs had been during the past two years by enemies in London and within their own borders. The reaction now set in; and a large and increasing section of the English nation watched with respect, and often with sympathy, a resistance conducted on strict constitutional lines to that which, even as seen from England, looked very like a deliberate system of small-minded and vexatious tyranny. In July, 1773, Franklin addressed a letter from London to Thomas Cushing, then Speaker of the Massachusetts Assembly. "With regard," he said, "to the sentiments of people in general here concerning America, I must say that we have among them many friends and well-wishers. The Dissenters are all for us, and many of the merchants and manufacturers. There seems to be, even among the country gentlemen, a growing sense of our importance, a disapprobation of the harsh measures with which we have been treated, and a wish that some means might be found of perfect reconciliation."

Under such circumstances it would have seemed impossible that a Ministry could rise to such a height of perverted ingenuity as to de-

liver Massachusetts from her isolation; to unite all the colonies in sudden, hot, and implacable disaffection towards the Crown; and to drive them into courses which would shock the pride and alienate the goodwill of England. But even that feat proved to be within the resources of statesmanship. Foremost among the questions of the day at Westminster was the condition of the East India Company, which now stood on the verge of bankruptcy. The home Government came forward handsomely with a large loan on easy terms, and a pledge not to insist on an annual tribute of four hundred thousand pounds which India had somehow contrived to pay, in spite of her deficits, into the British exchequer. But, over and above these palliatives, the Cabinet had at its disposal the means of relieving the famous Corporation from all its embarrassments. There lay stored in the warehouses tea and other Indian goods to the value of four millions, which had been in course of accumulation ever since the Company, not by its own fault, had lost a most promising customer. The American colonies, making a protest against the fiscal wrongs in a form which had its attractions for a thrifty people, had supplied themselves with smuggled tea from France, Denmark, Sweden, and especially from Holland; and those foreign merchants who had been tempted into the trade soon learned to accompany their consignments of tea with other sorts of Oriental produce. The Custom-house officers reckoned that Indian goods, which paid nothing to the Treasury and brought no profit to the Company, found their way into America to the amount of half a million in money every twelvemonth.

The opportunity was golden, and without alloy. If Ministers could bring themselves to adopt the suggestion made by the East Indian Directors, and advise a willing House of Commons to repeal the Tea-duty, they would, by one and the same straightforward and easy operation, choke up the underground channels along which commerce had begun to flow, pacify the colonies, and save the East India Company. The demand of the American market for tea was already enormous. The most portable and easily prepared of beverages, it was then used in the backwoods of the West as lavishly as now in the Australian bush. In more settled districts the quantity absorbed on all occasions of ceremony is incredible to a generation which has ceased to rejoice and to mourn in large companies and at great cost. The legislative assembly of more than one colony had passed sumptuary laws to keep the friends of the deceased from drinking his widow and orphans out of house and home; and whatever the gentlemen, who drove and

rode into a funeral from thirty miles round, were in the habit of drinking, the ladies drank tea. The very Indians, in default of something stronger, took it twice a day;<sup>22</sup> and however much attached they might be to their Great Father beyond the water, it must not be supposed that they made special arrangements in order to ensure that he had been paid his dues on the article which they consumed. If only the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with a few heartfelt sentences of frank retraction and cordial welcome, had thrown completely open the door of the Custom-house which already was ajar, all would have been well, then and thereafter. Before Parliament was many sessions older America, (after a less questionable fashion than the expression, when used in an English budget speech, usually implies,) would have drunk the East India Company out of all its difficulties.

A course which went direct to the right point was not of a nature to find favour with George the Third and his Ministers. They adopted by preference a plan under which the East India Company was allowed a drawback of the whole Tea-duty then payable in England, while the Exchequer continued to claim the threepence on the pound which was paid, (or, to speak more exactly, left unpaid,) in America. Their object was such that every one who ran a boatload of smuggled goods between Penobscot Bay and the mouth of the Savannah River could read. This wise scheme, (so Franklin put it,) was to take off as much duty in England as would make the Company's tea cheaper in America than any which foreigners could supply; and at the same time to maintain the duty in America, and thus keep alive the right of Parliament to tax the colonies. "They have no idea," he wrote, "that any people can act from any other principle but that of interest; and they believe that threepence in a pound of tea, of which one does not perhaps drink ten pounds in a year, is sufficient to overcome all the patriotism of an American."

They were not long in finding out their mistake. The King, (so North stated,) meant to try the question with America; and arrangements were accordingly made which, whatever else may be said of them, undoubtedly accomplished that end. In the autumn of 1773 ships laden with tea sailed for the four principal ports on the Atlantic seaboard, and agents or consignees of the East India Company were appointed by letter to attend their arrival in each of the four towns. The captain of the vessel despatched to Philadelphia found such a reception awaiting him that he sailed straight back to England. Boston

<sup>22</sup> *Dartmouth Correspondence*, January 19, 1773.



gratified the curiosity of an energetic patriot who expressed a wish to see whether tea could be made with salt water. At Charlestown the cargo was deposited in a damp cellar, where it was spoiled as effectually as if it had been floating on the tide up and down the channel between James Island and Sullivan's Island. And, when New York learned that the tea-ships allotted to it had been driven by a gale off the coast, men scanned the horizon, like the garrison of Londonderry watching for the English fleet in Lough Foyle, in their fear lest fate should rob them of their opportunity of proving themselves not inferior in mettle to the Bostonians. The great cities, to which all the colonies looked as laboratories of public opinion and theatres of political action, had now deliberately committed themselves to a policy of illegal violence which could not fail to wound the self-respect of the English people, and make Parliament, for many a long and sad year to come, an obedient instrument in the hands of men resolved at all hazards to chastise and humble America.

## CHAPTER III

### THE STATE OF POLITICAL PARTIES AT WESTMINSTER. FRANKLIN AND THE LETTERS

THE news from Boston came upon the mother-country in the provoking shape of a disagreeable surprise. For the ordinary English citizen it was news indeed. He had heard how at Philadelphia, on the 4th of June, 1766,—the first King's birthday which followed the repeal of the Stamp Act,—the healths of George the Third and Doctor Franklin had been drunk in public at the same table. From that moment he had reposed in a serene conviction that the American difficulty, for his own lifetime at all events, was over and done with. He took it for granted that the mob in New England was in the habit of hunting Custom-house officers, just as a Londoner, in the days before railroads, lived in the belief that the mob in the manufacturing districts of Lancashire was always breaking frames. He was aware that the troops had shot some townspeople in the streets of Boston. He was equally aware that, not many months before, the Footguards had shot some Wilkites in the Borough of Southwark; and the one occurrence had to his mind no deeper and more permanent significance than the other. The last serious fact connected with America which had come to his knowledge was that Parliament had gone a great deal more than half way to meet the wishes of the colonies, had removed all but a mere fraction of the unpopular duties, and had made an arrangement with the East India Company by which the colonists would thenceforward drink tea much cheaper than he could drink it himself. And now, as a recognition of her patience and self-control, and as a reply to her friendly advances, England was slapped in her smiling face with a zest and vigour which sent a thrill of exultation through all, in any quarter of the world, who envied her and wished her ill. It was true that close and dispassionate investigation would show that, for the treatment which she had received, she had

herself, or rather her chosen governors, to thank. But the first effect of an insult is not to set Englishmen computing and weighing what they have done to deserve it; and the national indignation, in heat and unanimity, hardly fell short of that which was in our time aroused throughout the Northern States of America by the bombardment of Fort Sumter.

The country was in a temper for any folly which its rulers would allow it to commit; and unfortunately the crisis had come just when the system of personal government had reached the culminating point of success towards which the King had long been working. Every particle of independence, and of wisdom which dared to assert itself, had at last been effectually eliminated from the Cabinet. Administrative experience was to be found there, and some forethought and circumspection, and plenty of timidity; but those Ministers who were afraid of strong courses stood in much greater terror of their strong monarch. The men who in March, 1770, had pronounced themselves against the retention of the Tea-duty were no longer in a position to warn or to advise him. The Duke of Grafton, after the humiliating defeat which on that occasion he suffered, lost no time in surrendering to Lord North the first place in the Government. He consented indeed, at the instance of the King, to keep the Privy Seal. But he consulted his own dignity by refusing to sit as a subordinate in a Cabinet which, while he was still Prime Minister, had overruled him in the case of a decision second in importance to none which any Cabinet was ever called on to take.

Conway and Sir Edward Hawke had retired from office; and Granby had met, in mournful fashion, death which he had gaily confronted on many a disputed field. Though four generations have come and gone, an English reader learns with something of a personal shock that there was a dark side to that brilliant career. Posterity remembers him as the Master-General of the Ordnance, and Commander-in-Chief of the army, whom no officer envied; the statesman whom every ally and every opponent loved; the leader of horse who was named with Ziethen and Seidlitz in all the cavalry barracks of Europe; the idol of the people in days when the people seldom troubled themselves to distinguish between one politician and another. But, with all this, Granby behind the scenes was an erring, an over-burdened, and at last a most unhappy man. He was a jovial companion to high and humble; a profuse and often unwise benefactor; a soldier of the camp in foreign lands, with little time and less inclination to

look closely into his private affairs at home; and, above all, an elderly heir-apparent to an immense estate;—and it cannot be denied that he had the faults of his qualities and of his position. Like some greater men, and with more excuse, at fifty years of age he had a broken constitution, and he was deep in debt. None the less, at the bidding of duty, he resisted the entreaties of George the Third, who was sincerely desirous not to lose him from the Ministry. Resigning his employments and emoluments, he retired into pecuniary embarrassment unrelieved by occupation and uncheered by health. A year afterwards he died at Scarborough, where he had gone in the hope of a cure, only to find himself involved in the worry and tumult of a contested Yorkshire election. “You are no stranger,” a friend of the family writes, “to the spirit of procrastination. The noblest mind that ever existed, the amiable man whom we lament, was not free from it. I have lived to see the first heir, of a subject, in the Kingdom, lead a miserable shifting life, attended by a levee of duns, and at last die broken-hearted,—for so he really was,—rather than say, ‘I will arise and go to my father.’ It is impossible to describe the distress of the whole country. Every place you passed through in tears, and the Castle was the head-quarters of misery and dejection. The Duke rose up to meet me with an appearance of cheerfulness, but soon relapsed into a sullen melancholy, and for three weeks he appeared to me petrified.”<sup>1</sup>

The departure of Conway, Hawke, and Granby, three men of the sword who feared nothing except an unrighteous quarrel, left the honour of England in the keeping of the Bedfords. For them it must be said that, when urging their views in council, they had all the advantage which proceeds from sincerity of conviction. Their ideas of ministerial discretion permitted them, whether sober, drunk, or half-seas over, to rail at the colonists as rebels and traitors before any company in London; and it may well be believed that they did not pick their words within the walls of that chamber where they had a right

<sup>1</sup> *Historical Manuscripts Commission*. Twelfth Report, Appendix, Part V. The letter is in sad contrast with another in the same volume written nine years before to Granby, then a recalcitrant invalid, by Lord Ligonier,—one of the few men who had a right to criticise or to compliment him. “I am to thank you for the remedy you have discovered for a fever. It has ever been unknown till your time; but now it is manifest that if a man is ordered to his bed with this disorder, he has nothing more to do than to jump out of it, get upon his horse, and fight away. But however prevailing that remedy has been on a late occasion, I do not recommend it for the future.” Such a message from such a soldier was a feather in the hat even of Granby,—if those who know his portraits can imagine him with any covering to his head. He had just come victorious out of the last and fiercest of his German battles.



to speak their entire mind in as plain terms as their colleagues would endure. What is known about the tractability of those colleagues is among the miracles of history; though the full extent of it can only be conjectured by a comparison of the partial revelations which have seen the light of day. In 1779 Lord North confessed to the King that for at least three years he had held in his heart the opinion that the system which the Government had pursued would end in the ruin of his Majesty and the country. Yet during three more years he continued to pursue that system, and would never have desisted from it if Washington had not been too strong for him abroad, and Charles Fox and his friends too many for him at home. Lord Gower, the President of the Council, supported in public North's policy, although he loved it no better than did North himself; but five years so spent were enough for him, and at the end of that period he appeased his conscience by a resignation which, for a member of that Ministry, may be called prompt and even premature. Strangest of all was the letter in which Lord Barrington, before ever a cannon had been fired or a sabre stained, had laid down in black and white his inward judgment on what had been the origin of the dispute, and on what should be the conduct of the war. He argued that it was madness on the part of any Ministry to impose a tax which no Ministry had the strength to levy; that the attempt to fight the colonists on land could only result in disaster and disgrace; that a judicious employment of our naval force was the least unpromising method of combating the rebellion; and that, so far from reinforcing the army in Massachusetts, the garrison should at once be withdrawn from Boston, leaving that undutiful city to its own devices. Those were his views, deliberately entertained and never abandoned; and nevertheless as Secretary at War he despatched to America every soldier who fought between the day of Bunker's Hill and the day of Monmouth Court House.

The theory of ministerial responsibility which then prevailed in high official circles was carefully laid down by Lord Barrington's brother, the Bishop of Durham, in a passage of biography agreeably redolent of fraternal pride. "In conjunction," the Bishop wrote, "with the other members of Administration, Lord Barrington bore the censures which were now very generally directed against the supporters of the American War: yet no person less deserved those censures. There is the clearest and most decisive evidence that Lord Barrington disapproved the adopted mode of coercion, and that he submitted, both to the King and his Ministers, his sentiments on the subject in the most

unequivocal terms. His opinion was that, though it became his duty to remonstrate with his colleagues in office, it was neither honourable nor proper for him to appeal to the uninformed judgments of others, and to play a game of popularity at the expense of the public."

The colleague to whom Lord Barrington more particularly addressed his remonstrances was Lord Dartmouth, the Secretary of State in charge of America. His selection for that post had been an act of true wisdom. With an empire such as ours, a judicious ruler, who has an appointment to make, takes due account of local tastes and preferences. He will flatter one colony by sending to it as governor a public man who is supposed to have studied agriculture, and will please another by appointing a nobleman who undoubtedly understands horses. Bringing the same knowledge of mankind into higher regions, George the Third and Lord North paid America a marked and acceptable compliment when they committed the care of her interests to the most distinguished member of a school of thought and practice which was already beginning to be called Evangelical.

The fame of Lord Dartmouth had been carried far and wide throughout the English-speaking world by that association of brave and sincere men who were in hard conflict with the vices of the age, and in earnest protest against the lukewarmness of its religious faith. He was a Churchman; and the claims of the Establishment were in small favour with the colonists. But he belonged to that section of Churchmen who looked outside, as well as within, their own borders for allies to aid them in their lifelong warfare against ignorance and indifference, misery, cruelty, and sin. Lord Halifax, accounted a rake and spendthrift even by that lax generation, had gone as far as he dared, and much farther than was safe, into a scheme for planting bishops in America. But Dartmouth, the light of whose goodness would have shone in the brightest days of Christianity, recognised only one spiritual banner beneath which men should fight, and cared little or nothing to what regiment belonged the arm that sustained it, if only it was carried worthily. He had long ago applied himself to the sage and praiseworthy task of turning to account the spirit of enthusiasm which had grown strong within the Church itself, under the fostering care of Wesley and Whitefield. Those eminent men had been encountered by a persecution, not discouraged by Church dignitaries, and in the coarser and more cruel forms of which a beneficed clergyman was too often the ringleader. But by the year 1764 that persecution had done its worst, and in vain. The heat of the day was already

borne, and the Methodists had obtained a standing so secure that their self-respect allowed them to offer terms. Wesley addressed to fifty ministers of the Establishment, who held the same essential doctrines as himself, a singularly skilful and beautiful letter; and that appeal for mutual good-will and united effort had, there is reason to believe, been prepared years beforehand under the eye of Lord Dartmouth. When the attempt at reconciliation failed, Wesley wrote to his noble coadjutor in the style which he sometimes employed when he was not pleased; but Dartmouth had no notion of throwing away such a friendship on account of a few frank and rough words. "Have you a person," asked Wesley, "in all England who speaks to your lordship so plain and downright as I do; who considers not the peer, but the man; who rarely commends, but often blames, and perhaps would do it oftener if you desired it?" More than once, as will be seen in the course of this narrative, Wesley made good his promise at a time when honest advice was of priceless value.

Dartmouth assisted Lady Huntingdon with his means and influence, and the still more needed contribution of his sound sense and knowledge of the world, in her endeavours to provide English pulpits with a supply of preachers who believed what they said, and were trained in the art of saying it. He found a wiser and not less open-handed auxiliary in John Thornton, the true founder of the Evangelicalism which was prevalent and prominent in the Established Church during the period when that Church took a forward part in courageous and unpopular movements for the general benefit of mankind. The two friends quietly and steadily applied themselves to mend the income of poor livings held by good men, to purchase advowsons, and to confer them upon clergymen who expounded the Gospel as they themselves had learned it. While pursuing this work they had the rare privilege of establishing a permanent claim on the gratitude of very many who have little sympathy with their specific creed. Lord Dartmouth made interest in high episcopal quarters to obtain the ordination of John Newton, who was too much in earnest about religion to be readily entrusted with a commission to teach it, except as a matter of favour to a great man. The statesman placed the divine in the curacy of Olney; and Mr. Thornton added an allowance of two hundred pounds a year. "Be hospitable," he wrote to Newton, "and keep an open house for such as are worthy of entertainment. Help the poor and needy." That roof soon sheltered a guest than whom few had been worthier of entertainment since Abraham's tent was pitched on the

plains of Mamre, and none had been more in need of it since this world began. For William Cowper spent the period of gloom and depression which fell upon him in middle life under Newton's care, and as a member of his family. It was at Dartmouth's cost that the house had been fitted and furnished, and decorated in a manner to suit the taste of the inmates.<sup>2</sup> And to Dartmouth Newton made periodical reports of his friend's condition in phraseology now long out of date, but alive with sentiments of tenderness and delicacy which were to the honour of him who wrote and him who read.

Dartmouth loved to hear from one or another of the two friends how much they were enjoying the comforts which they owed him; strolling in his woods, and mending their fare from his ponds, while at Whitehall, sixty miles away, he himself was fishing in very troubled waters. It was a relief to turn from the bullyings of the Bedfords, or from poor Lord Barrington's plaintive confidences, and to refresh his mind with the current news of a community which, quite apart from the Unwins, must certainly have been the most innocent of villages. "The simplicity and happy ignorance," Newton wrote, "of those who live in a country place is a great advantage to a minister. A few months ago I heard that some of them in their prayers at home had been much engaged for the welfare of Mr. Wilkes. As the whole town of Olney is remarkably loyal and peaceable with regard to the government, I was rather surprised that gentleman should have partisans amongst our serious people. Upon inquiry I found they had just heard of his name and that he was in prison. Comparing the imperfect account they had of him with what they read in their Bibles, they took it for granted that a person so treated must of necessity be a minister

<sup>2</sup> "We have daily new reason to thank your Lordship for our dwelling. On looking over the bills I observe that in some less essential articles there might have been a sparing. In the article of painting we pleased ourselves with mahogany doors, without being in the least aware that colour was dearer than white or brown. There is one line perhaps would surprise your Lordship, namely, for 160 letters in the study, 6s. 8d. This being no great sum, and out of the common road, I did not intend should appear in the bill. But perhaps you will allow me to explain it. If your Lordship had been at the Plantations in or about the year 1746, and was now to come to Olney, you would be sensible of an amazing difference between my situation there, and what it is here. I therefore ordered the following texts to be painted over the fireplace;—'Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou has been honourable; but thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondsman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee.'"

This was the house in which Cowper resided during the height of his malady. Before and afterwards, the two families lived separately. The extracts from Newton's letters are from the Fifteenth Report of the *Historical Manuscripts Commission*, Appendix, Part I.



of the Gospel, and under that character they prayed earnestly that he might be supported and enlarged. Mr. Cowper desires his respects. It was agreed between us that whoever wrote first should let your Lordship know that Mr. Cowper's servant can throw a casting net, that we love fish at both houses, and that, relying on your Lordship's goodness, we have sometimes thought of employing the servant to catch us some if he can."

In one of his first letters Newton expressed anxiety concerning the lady who holds high place among the Sisters of Mercy of literature. "My amiable guests are at present from home. Mr. Cowper has accompanied Mrs. Unwin this morning to St. Albans to consult Dr. Cotton. Her frame is exceedingly delicate, and she has a variety of symptoms which seem to threaten a consumption. The most alarming symptom to me (if I may dare to call it so) is her eminence in the Christian life and spirit. Her temper, her language, her very air, seem to indicate an unusual meetness for glory." The danger of a calamity, which many would still lament, passed away; and for Mrs. Unwin and her charge there ensued some years of occasional happiness and only too constant occupation. Sir Cowper, as he was styled by humbler neighbours who had not studied the baronetage, but who knew a gentleman when they saw him, was employed under Newton's direction on religious teaching and visiting;—the very last work to which his attention should have been directed. Cowper's health gave way; and about the time that Dartmouth's American difficulties began in earnest he received tidings which affected him even more than the Non-importation Agreement, or the burning of the schooner *Gaspee*. "He is now sitting by me, disconsolate. Lately he rejoiced in communion with God, and lived upon the foretaste of eternal glory. I believe few people living have given more unquestionable evidence of a heart truly devoted to God than my friend, yet he is now upon the brink of despair, and our most earnest endeavours to comfort him seem but to add to his distress. How often have I been ready to complain and say, 'Why does the Lord deal so heavily with a favoured and faithful servant?' Mr. Cowper was (as I verily believe) the foremost of us all. His whole behaviour was not only unblamable but exemplary. Two circumstances in his case, for which we cannot be sufficiently thankful, I must not omit. The one is the great patience and mildness of spirit which the Lord maintains in him; the other, that all his troubles and terrors are restrained when he goes to bed, so that he generally sleeps eight hours or more every night as undisturbed as a child." As soon as a favourable

change came, after many weary months, Dartmouth was the first to be informed that the Lord was on his way to turn mourning into joy. The patient awoke, to find his shelves bare of the books which, in his time of poverty, he had been compelled to sell. Dartmouth's library then supplied him with the volumes of travel over the study of which his mind regained its strength, and acquired a cheerfulness that endured long enough to depict itself for our delight in indelible colours before it once again was finally clouded.

Cowper, and Newton, and Lady Huntingdon, and the Wesleys were Church people, or tried stoutly to be accounted so. But Dartmouth's breadth of charity and ardour of conviction were bounded by no ecclesiastical barriers. In this respect he was in full sympathy with his friend John Thornton, who to the end of his travelling days never enjoyed an excursion to the mountains or the sea-coast unless he was accompanied by some Nonconformist minister who wanted, but could not afford, a holiday. Already, long before official position had made it worth his while to court popularity in the colonies, the peer had taken most effective interest in a school established on the New Hampshire frontier for the conversion and civilisation of the Indians: a school which, as time went on and his benefaction multiplied, received the name of Dartmouth College. In 1771 he invited the co-operation of the Bishop of London, and received a reply of a nature which goes further to illustrate the inward causes of the American troubles than many ponderous volumes of minutes and reports. The Bishop (so the answer ran) had received no intimation that the head of the college was to belong to the Church of England, or that the prayers to be used were those of the Liturgy. The other members of the Board, his Lordship further remarked, appeared to be Dissenters, and he therefore could not see how a bishop could be of use among them, and accordingly begged to decline the honour which the trustees had done him. Dartmouth—well aware that a religious undertaking in New England, if Dissenters were kept in the background, could not be expected to overflow with vitality—continued President of the Board. John Thornton acted as Treasurer: a function which, with his usual generosity, he took care should never be a sinecure.

The colonists saw that Dartmouth understood their ways, and was at one with them on matters which he regarded as infinitely higher and more important than any political differences. Whether he was in or out of office,—when he was advocating their cause, and when, in obedience to worse and stronger men than himself, he was doing his

utmost to ruin it,—they persisted in looking on him as a friend at heart. Virginia and New York addressed to him their felicitations on the repeal of the Stamp Act, accompanied, among other less romantic presents, by a young eaglet; at whose full-grown claws and beak, in coming years, he must have looked with mingled feelings when he paid a visit to his aviary. On the occasion of the Boston massacre of March, 1770, the popular leaders transmitted to Dartmouth a full account of their proceedings, as to an honest man who would take care that their statement of the case should be known at Court. When, in August, 1772, he was appointed Secretary of the Colonies, the news was hailed with satisfaction throughout America by people of all parties, and indeed of every colour. The effusions of joy and expectation which his advent to power excited began with a congratulatory ode from a negress, the last couplet of which, for the sentiment if not for the rhyme, might have passed muster in Cowper's "Table-talk."<sup>3</sup> As months rolled on, and the plot thickened, every post brought him more valuable testimonies of affection and confidence in the shape of letters of counsel from the most unlikely quarters. Good men, even from among the ranks of those whom he never without a twinge could call rebels, dared to write him their true thoughts, and cared to do it. When he allowed himself to become the instrument of an hostility which was foreign to his nature, and, it is to be feared, not consonant with his opinions, they diminished something from their respect, but he always retained their love. Two generations afterwards, in the July of 1829, the citizens of New York asked leave to detain his portrait, then on its way from England to the College which bore his name. The request was granted; and they placed the picture in their Hall of Justice, next those of Washington and Franklin, on the day of the Celebration of Independence. If Dartmouth could have ruled the colonies according to the dictates of his own judgment and his own conscience, that Independence would have been postponed till he had ceased to be Secretary of State; and, whenever it arrived, it would have excited very different feelings and recollections from those with which it was destined to be associated.

With all who were prudent in the Ministry cowed and silent, and its reckless members dominant and noisy, the nation, at this supreme moment, was likely to be ill piloted. Its best hope lay in those states-

<sup>3</sup> Thou, like the Prophet, find the bright abode  
Where dwells thy sire, the Everlasting God.

men out of office whose vocation was to restrain it from the mad courses towards which its rulers were hurrying it. More often than appears on the face of history, a Cabinet has been saved from the full consequences of its own policy by an opposition which did not shrink from the labour and odium of preventing the men in power from effecting all the mischief upon which their minds were set. But such a task, the most invidious which can fall within the sphere of public duty, requires something more for its successful performance than patriotic impulses and good intentions. Unfortunately those honourable and seemly political commodities now constituted nearly the whole stock in trade of the peers and county members who watched and criticised the Government. As Ministers, eight years before, they had done their duty faithfully and well during the brief period which elapsed between the moment when the King had no choice but to accept their services, and the moment when he first could find a pretext for dispensing with them. Burke's "Short Account of a Short Administration" set forth, with the unadorned fidelity of an inventory, the catalogue of performances which Lord Rockingham and his colleagues had packed into the compass of one year and twenty days. In tastes, in character, and in worldly position these men were suited to use power well, and to abandon it cheerfully as soon as they were unable any longer to employ it for the advantage of the country. But they were not equally inclined to conduct, year in and year out, the thankless and hopeless battle against able and unscrupulous opponents who were fighting like irritated bulldogs in defense of their salaries. For true gentlemen, and such the Rockinghams were, the prospect before them was not enticing. The best they could anticipate was to spend years in being bantered by Rigby, and brow-beaten by Thurlow, and denounced as traitors by Wedderburn for expressing in mild terms their sympathy with a cause which in former days he had almost contrived to bring into disrepute by the violence with which he had advocated it. And at the end of those years they might, as the crown of success, be able to force themselves into the counsels of a monarch who hated them, and who treated them as none among them would have treated the humblest of their dependents and retainers.

The Whig magnates, while they had little to gain from a political career, had in their own opinion almost everything to lose. In that age of enjoyment they had the best seats in the theatre of life; and their notions of pleasure squared even less than those of most men with the conditions under which hard public work is done. There were poli-



ticians for whom the sweetest hours of the twenty-four began when the rattle of the coaches up St. James's Street told that the House of Commons was no longer sitting, and ended when they were helped into their beds by daylight;—in whose eyes Ranelagh surpassed all the gardens of Chatsworth, and the trees in the Mall were more excellent than the elms at Althorp or the oaks of Welbeck. But Rockingham and his followers loved the country; and there were few amongst them who did not possess plenty of it to love. Assembling for business in a November fog, and wrangling on until a June sun shone reproachfully through the windows, seemed a doubtful form of happiness even to Gibbon, whose conceptions of rustic solitude did not go beyond a cottage at Hampton Court during the summer months. But to haunt London when the thorns were red and white and the syringas fragrant, or when the hounds were running over the Yorkshire pastures and the woodcocks were gathering in the Norfolk spinneys; to debate amidst clamour, and vote in a lobby where there was hardly space to stand, with the hope that at some unknown point in the future he might draw salary for a few quarter days,—was not a career to the mind of a great landowner who seldom got as much sport and fresh air as he could wish, and who, since he had outgrown the temptations of the card-table, had never known what it was to spend half his income.

In the spring of 1774 the Opposition retained very little hold on Parliament, and still less on the country. Their impotence was the constant theme of every one who was their well-wisher, and who would have been their supporter if they had provided him with anything to support. Their supine attitude was noticed with delight and exultation in the private letters of their adversaries, who were however far too judicious to taunt them with it in public; and among themselves it formed an unfailing subject of mutual confession and expostulation. For years together, both before and after the outbreak of the American War, the comments of Londoners who kept their friends at a distance informed of what was doing at Westminster are all in the same strain. "I wish I could send you some news," wrote Lord Townshend in 1772, "but all is dull and the town thin. The Opposition, poor souls who can do no harm, (the Dukes of Richmond, Devonshire, and Portland excepted,) seem to have left the nation entirely to this wicked Ministry." "Lord North," said Sir George Macartney in 1773, "has had a wonderful tide of success, and there does not seem anything likely to interrupt it. Opposition is growing

ridiculous and contemptible, and 'tis now said that after this Session Lord Rockingham will give it up."

The colonial difficulty, instead of bracing the sinews of the Opposition, only made them more conscious of their own helplessness. The Duke of Richmond, who was the fighting man of the party in the Lords, admitted in March, 1775, that he felt very languid about the American business, that he saw no use in renewing efforts which invariably failed, and that in his view nothing would restore common sense to the country except the dreadful consequences which must follow from what he called the diabolical policy on which it was embarked. Samuel Curwen, a Tory exile who had fled across the Atlantic Ocean in what may be described as the First Emigration, kept a close watch on the proceedings at Westminster. He comforted the fellow-loyalists, whom he had left behind him in the clutches of the Sons of Liberty, with assurances that the Opposition in the British Parliament was too inconsiderable in numbers, influence, and activity to hinder the plans of the Administration for restoring order in New England.<sup>4</sup> Horace Walpole, an honest and anxious patriot beneath all his fashionable gossip and antiquarian frippery, thus wound up a long series of passages reflecting on the degeneracy of the party which professed to withstand the Court. "I would lay a wager that if a parcel of schoolboys were to play at politicians, the children that should take the part of the opposition would discover more spirit and sense. The cruelest thing that has been said of the Americans by the Court is that they were encouraged by the Opposition. You might as soon light a fire with a wet dishcloth." The complaint was uttered in October, 1777, and it was the last of the number. In the November of the same year Charles Fox openly, visibly, and definitively assumed the lead of the Whigs in the House of Commons; and from that moment onwards, whatever other charge might be brought against the Opposition, no man ever spoke of their apathy again.

Epithet for epithet, the retrospective loyalty due from Liberals to a former chief of their party would incline them to compare Lord Rockingham to a nobler article of domestic use than that which suggested itself to Horace Walpole; but a wet blanket he certainly must be called. He was the most exalted instance in Parliamentary history of the force of Burke's maxim that a habit of not speaking at all grows upon men as fast as a habit of speaking ill, and is as great a misfortune. To the end of his days, whenever Rockingham had mustered

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Curwen to the Hon. William Browne of Boston. London, December 4, 1775.

courage to open his mouth in public, he was congratulated as if he had been a young county member who had moved the Address, without breaking down, on the first day of his first Parliament. "It gave me great pleasure," wrote the Duke of Richmond in 1769, "to hear that you had exerted yourself to speak in the House; and I am particularly pleased that you returned to the charge on the second day, and replied: for it gives me hopes that you will get rid of that ill-placed timidity which has hitherto checked you. Be assured, you cannot speak too often. Practice will make it easy to you." It was a curious way of writing to a man who had already been Prime Minister.

If in the Lords the Opposition had a leader whose heart sank within him whenever he gave the word of command, the Opposition in the Commons had to do as they best could without any leader whatsoever. They came to the House, as Burke ruefully expressed it, to dispute among themselves, to divert the Ministry, and to divide eight and twenty. There was indeed always Burke, who during a quarter of a century adorned and illustrated the cause of freedom; and who, when in his declining years he exerted his eloquence against the French Revolution, led or rather drove the House of Commons and the Government, and the country too. But his merits and his failings alike disqualified him to be the titular head of one of the great parties in the fastidious and aristocratic parliaments of the eighteenth century. He had some of the faults of his time, and some of the defects which were then imputed to his place of birth. He wanted self-control in debate, and he seldom observed a sense of proportion either in the length of his speeches, or in the size and colour of his rhetorical figures. There are passages in Burke, rich to gaudiness and audacious almost to crudity, which are equally astonishing when we reflect that a human imagination was capable of producing them without previous study, and when we remember that they were spoken, in the actual words which we now read, to a House of Commons waiting for its dinner or (more inconceivable still) to a House of Commons that had dined.<sup>5</sup> He lived beyond his means, and was far too much in

<sup>5</sup>In 1770, when arguing for an inquiry into the administration of the law of libel, Burke thus expressed his want of confidence in the Judges: "The lightning has pierced their sanctuary, and rent the veil of their temple from the top even to the bottom. Nothing is whole, nothing is sound. The ten tables of the law are shattered and splintered. The Ark of the Covenant is lost, and passed into the hands of the uncircumcised. Both they and ye are become an abomination unto the Lord. In order to wash away your sins, let Moses and the prophets ascend Mount Sinai, and bring us down the second table of the law in thunders and lightnings; for in thunders and lightnings the constitution was first, and must now, be established."

the company of relatives who were not particular as to the methods by which they endeavoured to fill their empty purses. But that circumstance in itself was no bar to the favour of an Assembly where the receipt for mending an impaired fortune was to sell votes for allotments in government loans and for shares in government contracts. The unpardonable sin of Edmund Burke was that he owed his position in the political world to nothing except his industry and his genius.

He knew his place; and if he ever forgot it, there were those at hand who made it a matter of conscience to deal with him faithfully. He left among his papers a noble composition which, if it had been a fifth of the length that it is, would have been as widely admired as Dr. Johnson's reply to Lord Chesterfield. It was the draft answer to a letter from Dr. Markham, the Bishop of Chester, and tutor to the Prince of Wales. Markham was known during his life, and is still remembered, for having almost contrived to make sycophancy one of the fine arts. His reverence for those whom the poets of the eighteenth century called "the Great" was in marked contrast to his treatment of one who was great for all time. In 1764 Markham entreated the Duke of Bedford to procure him "one of the inferior bishoprics." "Whatever preferment," the Reverend Doctor wrote, "I may chance to rise to, I shall not set a higher value on any of its emoluments than on the ability it may possibly give me of being useful to some of your Grace's friends." His style was very different when he saw occasion to address Edmund Burke. Even at this distance of time it is impossible to read without indignation the terms in which a pompous formalist, who had begged and bargained himself into a great position, ventured to upbraid an exalted thinker, who had missed wealth and prosperity, for his presumption in expressing an opinion on matters which were too high for him and on people of a station above his own. The Churchman expressed surprise that the member of Parliament resented the advice to bring down the aim of his ambition to a lower level, and reminded him that arrogance in a man of his condition was intolerable. Burke's conduct was ridiculous folly, and his house a hole of adders; and, being what he was, he had the insolence to ill-treat the first men of the kingdom;—those first men being Rigby and Lord Barrington, whose names are now chiefly remembered because they occasionally appear to disadvantage in a corner of one of his scathing sentences. It was not a question, the Bishop said, of what pretensions his correspondent might have, but of what claims the world would choose to allow him.



"My Lord," was the reply, "I think very poorly of Ned Burke or his pretensions; but, by the blessing of God, the just claims of active members of Parliament shall never be lowered in the estimation of mankind by my personal or official insignificance. The dignity of the House shall not be sunk by my coming into it. At the same time, my Lord, I shall keep free from presumption. If ever things should entitle me to look for office, it is my friends who must discover the place I hold in Parliament. I shall never explain it. I protest most solemnly that, in my eye, thinking as I do of the intrinsic dignity of a member of Parliament, I should look upon the highest office the subject could aspire to as an object rather of humiliation than of pride. It would very much arrange me in point of convenience. It would do nothing for me in point of honour."

Burke needed no candid friend to bid him take a lower seat. The iron had entered into his soul, never to leave it; and, far from aspiring to the first place, he was well aware that he could not afford even to be conspicuous. "I saw and spoke to several," he writes on one occasion. "Possibly I might have done service to the cause, but I did none to myself. This method of going hither and thither, and agitating things personally, when it is not done in chief, lowers the estimation of whoever is engaged in such transactions; especially as they judge in the House of Commons that a man's intentions are pure in proportion to his languor in endeavouring to carry them into execution."<sup>6</sup> So deeply impressed was he with the preponderating influence which birth and rank then exercised in the transactions of politics that he seriously thought of inviting Lord George Germaine to marshal and command the party. At a very early moment however it became evident that, for people who wanted to be taken under fire, it was not enough to get Lord George Germaine into the saddle. A division in Parliament answers to a charge in the field, and Lord George had as little eye or heart for the one as for the other. It soon got to Burke's saying plainly and bluntly that, whether his Lordship concurred or not, no human consideration would hinder himself, for one, from dividing the House; and the paths of the two men thenceforward finally diverged. The nobleman took the road which led to place, and salary, and a perceptible addition to the heavy account which already stood against him in a ledger of Britain's glory. The commoner returned to his continuous and at length victorious wrestle with corrup-

<sup>6</sup> Burke to Rockingham, January 10, 1773.

tion in high places, and to his honourable and indispensable but obscure labours behind the scenes of the senatorial theatre.

"Burke," said the Duke of Richmond, "you have more merit than any man in keeping us together;" and none knew better than his Grace how hard the task was. The exertions of the great orator were by no means confined to the Chamber in which he himself sate. He counted the peers as a part of the flock which he tended with so small a prospective share in the profits, and so exclusive a monopoly of the toil and the anxiety. He wrote their Protests; he drew their Resolutions; he told them when they were to speak, and sketched, not always in outline, what they were to say. From Rockingham downwards he urged on them the duty of attendance at Westminster, putting aside the plea of weak health with decorous but ambiguous incredulity. His desk was full of pathetic epistles in which the fathers of the Whig party, in both Houses, begged to be allowed a little longer holiday from the public debates, and (what in that season of discouragement and depression they liked even less) from the private consultations of the party. "Indeed, Burke," wrote the Duke of Richmond from Goodwood, "you are too unreasonable to desire me to be in town some time before the meeting of Parliament. You see how very desperate I think the game is. You know how little weight my opinion is of with our friends in the lump; and to what purpose can I then meet them? No; let me enjoy myself here till the meeting, and then at your desire I will go to town and look about me for a few days." Even Savile stopped at home, for reasons sufficiently elevated and disinterested to have commended themselves to John Hampden, but which none the less kept him out of the way when he was most wanted. Lord John Cavendish, never good at excuses, was reduced to admit that he stayed in the country to hunt; and Burke's sentiment with regard to him was divided between respect for his frankness, and regret for the absence of the keenest politician in a family group who required no watching or stimulating when once he had collected them in London.

The state of things was described by Mason in a satire written just before the change for the better came.

For, know, poor Opposition wants a head.  
With hound and horn her truant schoolboys roam  
And for a fox-chase quit Saint Stephen's dome,  
Forgetful of their grandsire Nimrod's plan,  
"A mighty hunter, but his prey was man."

Even in his rebukes Mason drew a distinction, creditable to the Rockinghams, between their favourite pursuits and the recreations in vogue among their political adversaries, who, according to the poet,

At crowded Almack's nightly bet,  
To stretch their own beyond the nation's debt.

A few months after the lines appeared the Opposition was no longer headless. They had found a chief in Charles Fox, and Charles Fox soon cured them of laziness. Already as much the heaviest of heavy weights as Lord John Cavendish was light among the lightest, it was from Almack's rather than from the hunting-field that the leader came whose exhortations and example kept bench and lobby packed with an animated, a devoted, and an ever-increasing throng of followers throughout all the closing sessions of the great dispute.

The Whigs defended themselves to each other, and, when they dared, tried to pacify their taskmaster by the allegation that public action was useless in the House because public feeling was asleep in the country. But this, as Burke did not hesitate to inform them, was their own fault. They were selfishly indifferent about what he regarded as a statesman's primary function, that of instructing the people to discern and pursue their own highest interests. When it was a question of preventing a rival family from securing the representation of the shire in which he lived, any one of them was ready to spend his last guinea; to mortgage his home-farm; to cut down his avenue; to rise from a sick bed, (like poor Granby,) in order to vote, and canvass, and dine in a stuffy tavern, at an unheard-of hour, in a company with whom outside politics he had not a taste in common. And yet the same man would take no trouble, and sacrifice none of his leisure, in order to teach his countrymen what they ought to think about their own grievances, and the dangers and duties of the nation. If the Opposition, so Burke told them, were to electioneer with the same want of spirit as they displayed over the advocacy of those great principles which were the end and object for which elections exist, there would not be a Whig member left in Yorkshire or in Derbyshire. "The people," he wrote, "are not answerable for their present supine acquiescence: indeed they are not. God and nature never made them to think or act without guidance and direction."

But guidance was impossible when the guides themselves were uncertain about the quarter towards which they should advance and, in any case, were in no hurry to start. As far as the supply of public

questions was concerned, the party was living from hand to mouth, and fared very sparingly. Wilkes, if it is not profane to say so, had in his day been nothing short of a godsend; and, to do them justice, the Whigs had made the most of him.<sup>7</sup> But by this time the country was tired of Wilkes, and Wilkes was still more heartily tired of himself as a public character and an idol for popular enthusiasm. One fruitful lesson might have been drawn from the story of the Middlesex election; and that it remained unlearned was in a large degree Burke's own doing. The features of that scandalous and sordid struggle;—the majority, docile themselves, and insolently intolerant of free speech in others; the aspect of Lord Clive walking about with the consciences of ten senators in his pocket, and of forty Scotch members voting like one as the Court bade them;—turned the attention of a few thoughtful politicians towards the remedy of Parliamentary Reform. Several Whig statesmen had pet schemes of their own. But whenever they showed any disposition to agree upon a plan, and to array themselves in support of it, Burke threw himself across their path as an opponent; and, like the conquering brigade at Albuera, his dreadful volleys swept away the head of every formation. It was useless for Savile to recommend the shortening of parliaments, or for Richmond to suggest the extension of the franchise. As soon as their proposals had taken shape and attracted notice, Burke appealed to all sober thinkers to say whether England was not the happiest of communities in its exemption from the horrible disorders of frequent elections; and whether it would not be more in the spirit of our constitution, and more agreeable to the pattern of our best laws, rather to lessen the number, and so add to the weight and independency of our voters.

At last the Whigs were confronted by a question which aroused them as their forefathers were stirred by the imposition of Ship-money. It became known that the Irish Parliament meditated a bill laying a tax of two shillings in the pound on the estates of absentee land-owners; that the Irish Government, in sore straits for funds, would assist the measure to become law; and that the English Government was prepared to accept it if it was carried in Ireland. The rich Whig proprietors were deeply moved; and on this occasion they showed no want of vigour and alacrity. They addressed to the Prime Minister

<sup>7</sup> "The people were very much and very generally touched with the question on Middlesex. We never had, and we never shall have, a matter every way so well calculated to engage them. The scantiness of the ground makes it the more necessary to cultivate it with vigour and diligence, else the rule of *exiguum colito* will neither be good farming, nor good politics."—Burke to Lord Rockingham, September 8, 1770.



a memorial praying that the Privy Council would refuse to pass the bill; and no abler and more artful state-paper had been signed by the great names of the party since the invitation to William of Orange. The letter to Lord North was even better worded than that historical document of the past, for Burke drew it up; and it was not less sincerely felt by those who set their hands to it. But all the considerations put forth in condensed and formidable array by the most skilful of Irish pens, employed on a strange office, will not avail against a couple of sentences which described the attitude of the first among living Englishmen. "I could not," said Chatham, "as a peer of England, advise the King to reject a tax sent over here as the genuine desire of the Commons of Ireland, acting in their proper and peculiar sphere, and exercising their inherent exclusive right, by raising supplies in the manner they judge best. This great principle of the constitution is so fundamental and with me so sacred and indispensable, that it outweighs all other considerations." In the end, the proposal was defeated in the Irish Parliament. The noblemen who had broad acres in both countries commanded a greater influence in Dublin even than that which they exercised at Westminster. The Irish Ministry, who by this time had learned that the King, for once agreeing with the Rockinghams, had condemned the tax as "very objectionable,"<sup>8</sup> fought to lose, and with some difficulty got themselves beaten by a narrow majority. But, narrow as it was, it saved the Whigs from the calamity of a debate in the British Parliament; a prospect which Savile contemplated with the repugnance of a sensible man who had no fancy for losing his sleep in a cause so damaging to his party. Little credit, he wrote to Rockingham, was to be obtained out of a question in which it was notorious that they were all personally interested. "Having a day of it, as the phrase is, will not get us much laurels. I am sure having a night of it will be worse to me than a land-tax."

The exhibition to which Savile looked forward with just apprehension was happily averted; but none the less the Whigs were out of touch with the country, out of heart with their parliamentary work, and of small account among a class whose adhesion in sufficient numbers no party, which looks to office, can afford to lose. Pushing men, whose prime object is to make their way in life, whether they aspire to be Lord Chancellors or tide-waiters, are apt to grow cool in their loyalty, and (after a more or less decent interval) hot in their antagonism, to statesmen who cannot fight their own battles. Philip Francis

<sup>8</sup> The King to Lord North, November 23, 1773.

was only one of thousands who, to employ his own words, had seen plainly that "no solid advantage would come from connection with a party which had almost all the wit, and popularity, and abilities in the kingdom to support them, but never could carry a question in either House of Parliament." England had seldom been in a worse case. The tornado was approaching fast, and, according to Horace Walpole, her public men were at their wit's end; which, he added, was no long journey. There were some, he said, who still put their faith in Lord Chatham's crutch, as a wand which might wave the darkness and the demons away together; though his Lordship, in Walpole's opinion, was better at raising a storm than at laying one. But it was natural enough that men should turn in their despair to the imposing figure of the old magician, who had made the name of their country supreme abroad, and who had always stood for freedom and justice whenever and wherever they were in peril. Chatham had broadened and ennobled the discussion of the Middlesex election. He had surveyed the problem of the Absentee Tax from the point of view of a true statesman. He had watched the growing greatness of the American colonies with an affectionate pride which he of all men had a right to feel. For years past he had been in favour of Parliamentary Reform. "Allow a speculator in a great chair," he wrote in 1771, "to add that a plan for more equal representation, by additional knights of the shire, seems highly reasonable."

However much, in his habitual strain of stately humility, Chatham might affect to disparage his own importance, he was far removed from the modern notion of an arm-chair politician; for, when he felt strongly, he was still ready to place himself where hard blows were being taken and given. But years had begun to tell upon him, and when the occasion came he was no longer certain of being equal to his former self. Joseph Cradock, a man with means and connections, and some tincture of letters, gives in his *Memoirs* an account of a scene which indicates that Lord Chatham could not always at will reach the level which had been without difficulty maintained by William Pitt. On a day when the King opened Parliament, while Wilkes was in his zenith, a mob broke into the passage leading to the throne, and there was crowding, and something like rioting, at the very door of the House of Lords. "Lord Carlisle," said Cradock, "seeing my distress, most kindly recognised me, and made room for me between himself and another nobleman. That nobleman got up to speak; and then I perceived that it was the great Lord Chatham, whom I had

never seen but as Mr. Pitt. He spoke only for a short time, was confused, and seemed greatly disconcerted; and then, suddenly turning to me, asked whether I had ever heard him speak before. 'Not in this House, my Lord,' was my reply. 'In no House, Sir,' says he, 'I hope, have I ever so disgraced myself. I feel ill, and I have been alarmed and annoyed this morning before I arrived. I scarce know what I have been talking about.'” Later on in the debate a peer made an uncomplimentary reference to Chatham. “He suddenly arose, and poured forth a torrent of eloquence that utterly astonished. The change was inconceivable; the fire had been kindled, and we were all electrified with his energy and excellence. At length he seemed quite exhausted, and, as he sat down, with great frankness shook me by the hand, and seemed personally to recollect me, and I then ventured to say, ‘I hope your Lordship is satisfied.’ ‘Yes, Sir,’ replied he, with a smile, ‘I think I have now redeemed my credit.’”

Lord Chatham's health was worse than fitful, and he sate in the wrong House of Parliament for forming and leading a national party. Nor must it be forgotten that the only existing nucleus for such a party was the group which owned allegiance to Lord Rockingham; and against Rockingham and his associates Chatham was bitterly prejudiced. He taught himself to believe that his quarrel with them was on account of their moderation: a fault which, if he had cared to take them in the right way, he would have been the very man to cure. But instead of trying to infuse into them the fire and resolution which they lacked, his mind was bent on outbidding discrediting them. “I am resolved,” he said, “to be in earnest for the public, and shall be a scare-crow of violence to the gentle warblers of the grove, the moderate Whigs and temperate statesmen.” That was not the tone which Charles Fox, as fierce a fighter as Chatham himself had been in his most strenuous days, adopted towards men whose abilities and virtues he respected, and whose inertness and unconcern were soon exchanged for very opposite qualities when once he had filled them with his own spirit.

There was one man who possessed the talents, the turn of character, the official position, and the intimate personal acquaintance both with England and America which qualified him to be mediator between the public opinion of the two countries; and he had all the will in the world to perform the office. Out of the last seventeen years Franklin had spent fourteen in London as agent for Pennsylvania; and of late he had been agent for Georgia and Massachusetts as well. The

ambassadors accredited to St. James's from foreign Courts treated him like an esteemed member of their own body. He was at home in the best society in town and country, awing every company by his great age and pleasing them by his immortal youth. The ministers of state with whom he had business minded their behaviour in the presence of one who had talked with Sir William Wyndham before they themselves had been born or thought of. Men of letters and men of science could not have enough of the reminiscences of a veteran who fifty years before had heard Mandeville discourse at his club, and had been shown by Sir Hans Sloane over his collection of curiosities at a time when the British Museum was yet in the future. People hardly remembered that he was a colonist, and were as proud of his European reputation as if he had been the native of an English county and the scholar of an English university. He returned the feeling. He loved our country, and all parts of it. At Dublin he had been greeted with the irresistible welcome which Irishmen bestow upon those to whom they wish to do the honours of Ireland. He had spent in Scotland the six happiest weeks of his life; and there, if circumstances had permitted, he would gladly have passed the rest of it. And as for England,—“Of all the enviable things,” he said, “I envy it most its people. Why should that pretty island, which is but like a stepping-stone in a brook, scarce enough of it above water to keep one’s shoes dry, enjoy in almost every neighbourhood more sensible, virtuous, and elegant minds than we can collect in ranging a hundred leagues of our vast forests?”<sup>9</sup>

He had long looked forward to the evening of life, the last hours of which, in his cheerful view, were sure to be the most joyous; and he had pleased himself with the anticipation of dying, as he had been

<sup>9</sup> In our own time, as in Franklin’s, Americans are apt to express their kindly sentiments towards England in diminutives, like a Russian who calls the Empress his Little Mother.

“An islet is a world,” she said,  
 “When glory with its dust has blended,  
 And Britain keeps her noble dead  
 Till earth and sea and skies are rended.”

. . . . .  
 Nay, let our brothers of the West  
 Write smiling in their florid pages;  
 “One-half her soil has walked the rest  
 In poets, heroes, martyrs, sages.”

The verses are by Wendell Holmes; and the idea, or something like it, has passed across the fancy of many a one of his countrymen beneath the limes of Stratford-on-Avon churchyard, or in the transepts of Westminster Abbey.



born and had always lived, in "the King's dominions." But now he foresaw storms and troubles and, at near seventy years of age, he did not expect to see the end of them; as the Ministers might read in a letter which they had thought it worth their while to detain and violate. That apprehension lent force and earnestness to the efforts which he made in every quarter where his influence could penetrate. On the one hand he adjured the New Englanders to reflect that, just as among friends every affront was not worth a duel, so between the mother-country and the colonies every mistake in government, and every encroachment on right, was not worth a rebellion. On the other hand he took care that any British statesman to whose ears he could obtain access should hear the words of reason and soberness; and the best of them regarded him as a valuable coadjutor in preserving the peace of the Empire. Chatham, in the House of Lords, openly said that if he were first minister he should not scruple publicly to call to his assistance a man whom all Europe held in high estimation for his knowledge and wisdom, and did not hesitate to rank with Boyle and Newton as an honour, not to the English nation only, but to human nature.

Most unfortunately, at this exact moment, Franklin became the centre of one of those unhappy scandals which in a season of political perturbation are certain to occur; and which are made the very most of by able men who mean mischief, and by the multitude who do not understand the deeper issues but can be voluble on a personal question. There had reached his hands a mass of correspondence which proved beyond any manner of doubt that Hutchinson and Oliver, the Governor and Lieutenant-Governor of Massachusetts, had persistently applied themselves to inflame the minds of the home authorities against the colony, and had been profuse in the suggestion of schemes framed with the object of destroying its liberties. The letters were private; but Franklin, as agent for Massachusetts, thought it incumbent upon him to send them to the Speaker of her Assembly; and he continued to think so until his life's end, though it was not a subject on which he loved to talk. It is a sound rule that confidential correspondence should, under no circumstances whatever, be used for the purpose of damaging a political adversary. In our own day, private letters attributed to a celebrated public man were printed in a great newspaper; and the step was defended on the ground that the writer was a public enemy, whose exposure was demanded by the interests of the State. That argument must have presented itself in its utmost force to the agent of a colony, when he lighted on the discovery that men—

born and reared within its confines, eating its bread and charged with its welfare—had done their utmost to misrepresent its people, to destroy its chartered rights, and to bring upon it the insult, the hardship, and the fearful perils of a penal military occupation.

And, again, it must be remembered that the sanctity of the Post Office was then a transparent fiction. No man's correspondence was safe; and those who suffered the most were tempted, when the occasion offered, to repay their persecutors in kind. The confidential clerks of the Postmaster-General were sometimes engaged twelve hours on a stretch in rifling private letters. The King, to judge by the endorsements in his own hand,—which marked the hour and minute when he received each packet of intercepted documents, and the hour and minute when he returned it to the Office,—must have passed a great deal of his time in reading them. A politician, when his turn came to be out in the cold, recognised the liability to have his letters opened as one of the incidents of opposition, and did not expect even the poor compliment of having them reclosed with any decent appearance of concealing the treatment to which they had been subjected. "To avoid the impertinence of a Post Office," wrote Lord Charlemont to Edmund Burke, "I take the opportunity of sending this by a private hand." And Hans Stanley, a public servant of considerable note in his day, complained to Mr. Grenville that all his correspondence, important or trivial, "had been opened in a very awkward and bungling manner."

Bold men, with a secure social position and a touch of humour, made use of the opportunity in order to give their opponents in the Cabinet a piece of their mind under circumstances when it could not be resented. A friend of George Selwyn regaled him with a personal anecdote, rather abstruse in itself, and rendered hopelessly unintelligible by being couched in bad Latin. "I wrote this," he says, "to perplex Lord Grantham, who may probably open the letter." "I don't know," Rigby told the Duke of Bedford, "who is to read this letter, whether French ministers or English ministers; but I am not guarded in what I write, as I choose the latter should know through every possible channel the utter contempt I bear them."<sup>10</sup> But a system which was no worse than a tiresome and offensive joke to men of the world, who wore swords, and met the Postmaster-General on equal terms

<sup>10</sup> The letter, good reading like everything of Rigby's, referred to the composition of Rockingham's first Government. "Their Board of Trade," he wrote, "is not yet fixed, except Lord Dartmouth for its head, who I don't hear has yet recommended Whitefield for the bishopric of Quebec."

every other evening at White's or Almack's, had its real terrors for humble people. A gentleman wrote from London to New York, with nothing more treasonous to say than that he was concerned at the alarming and critical situation. He expressed himself, however, as fearing that his American letters, to judge by the red wax over a black wafer, were opened in the Post Office; and he justly observed that intercourse between friend and friend was rendered precarious by such conduct on the part of the authorities. Franklin himself had the same grievance against the British Government; and took it very coolly. Many months before the war broke out he had occasion thus to warn his sister in Boston: "I am apprehensive that the letters between us, though very innocent ones, are intercepted. They might restore to me yours at least, after reading them; especially as I never complain of broken, patched-up seals." "I am told," he said on another occasion, "that administration is possessed of most of my letters sent or received on public affairs for some years past; copies of them having been obtained from the files of the several Assemblies, or as they passed through the Post Office. I do not condemn their ministerial industry, or complain of it."

Whether Franklin was justified in his own sight by high considerations of policy, or by the bad example of the British Post Office, his conduct required no defence in the view of his employers beyond the water. He had intended the letters to be seen by about as many pairs of eyes as those which, in London official circles, had the privilege of prying into his own correspondence; and his object was to enlighten certain leading men of the colony, belonging to both parties, with regard to the character of the Governor, and to put them on their guard against his machinations. But such secrets are hard to keep when men's minds are in a ferment, and when great events are in the air. The Massachusetts Assembly insisted on having the letters. On the second of June, 1773, the House, sitting within closed doors, heard them read by Samuel Adams, and voted by a hundred and one to five that their tendency and design was to subvert the constitution of the Government, and to introduce arbitrary power into the Province. Before another month was out they had been discussed in all the farm-houses, and denounced from almost all the pulpits. They came upon the community as a revelation from the nether world, and everywhere aroused unaffected astonishment and regret, which soon gave place to resentment and alarm. "These men," (it was said with a unanimity which the majority of twenty to one in the Assembly inadequately

represented,) "no strangers or foreigners, but bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, born and educated among us," have alienated from us the affections of our sovereign, have destroyed the harmony and goodwill which existed between Great Britain and Massachusetts, and, having already caused bloodshed in our streets, will, if unchecked, plunge our country into all the horrors of civil war. The sentiments of the colony were embodied by the Assembly in an address to the King, stating the case against Hutchinson and Oliver in terms which cannot be described as immoderate, and still less as disrespectful; and humbly but most pointedly praying for their removal from office. Franklin placed the petition in the hands of the Secretary of State, for presentation to his Majesty at the first convenient opportunity; and Dartmouth, in return, expressed his pleasure that a sincere disposition prevailed in the people of Massachusetts to be on good terms with the mother-country, and his earnest hope that the time was at no great distance when every ground of uneasiness would cease, and tranquillity and happiness would be restored.

Dartmouth's intuitions, as usual, were good and wise. The opportunity had come for the mother-country to assume an attitude of true superiority. An ancient and powerful State, in its dealings with dependencies whose social system is still primitive, and whose public men are as yet untrained, can afford to make allowance for faults of taste, or even for breaches of official custom and propriety. But dignified self-restraint was not then the order of the day in high places. The complaint of Massachusetts against her Governors was referred to the Privy Council, and the Solicitor-General appeared on behalf of Hutchinson and Oliver to oppose the prayer of the petition. That Solicitor-General was Wedderburn, who before he joined the Government had told them in debate that their policy would inevitably ruin the country by the total loss of its American dominions; and that, if for reasons which could not be made public such a policy must be continued, Lord North would have to remain in office, as no man of honour or respectability would undertake to do the duties of his situation.

It was put about town that the famous advocate intended to handle Dr. Franklin in a style which would be worth the hearing. Privy Councillors attended in such numbers that they would almost have made a quorum in the House of Commons. At the bar stood rows of distinguished strangers, more worthy of the title than those who are ordinarily designated by it on such occasions, for Burke, and Priestley,



and Jeremy Bentham were among them. The ante-room and passages were thronged with people who had to content themselves with learning, from the tones of his voice, that a great orator was speaking contemptuously of some one. For the Solicitor was as good as his word. Leaving aside the merits of the question, he directed against Franklin a personal attack which was a masterpiece of invective. The judges in the case, encouraged by the undisguised delight of their Lord President, rolled in their seats and roared with laughter. Lord North, alone among the five and thirty, listened with gravity in his features and, it may be believed, with something like death in his heart. Franklin, as a friend who closely observed his bearing relates, "stood conspicuously erect, without the smallest movement of any part of his body. The muscles of his face had been previously composed, so as to afford a tranquil expression of countenance, and he did not suffer the slightest alteration of it to appear during the continuance of the speech." He wore a full dress suit of spotted Manchester velvet, which that evening retired into the recesses of his wardrobe. It reappeared on the sixth of February, 1778, when he affixed his signature to that treaty with France by which the United States took rank as an independent nation, and obtained a powerful ally. So smart a coat attracted the notice of his brother Commissioners, accustomed to see him in the staid and almost patriarchal costume which all Paris knew. They conjectured, and rightly, that it was the first day since the scene at the Privy Council Office on which he cared to be reminded of what had occurred there.

The immediate effect of Wedderburn's harangue, as an appeal to men sitting in a judicial capacity, has in our country never been surpassed; and its ultimate consequences went far beyond the special issue towards which it was directed. Twenty years afterwards, when Franklin's pamphlet entitled "Rules for Reducing a great Empire to a small one" was republished in London, the editor paid to Lord Loughborough a compliment which, as Alexander Wedderburn, he had justly earned. "When I reflect," such were the words of the Dedication, "on your Lordship's magnanimous conduct towards the author of the following Rules, there is a peculiar propriety in dedicating this new edition of them to a nobleman whose talents were so eminently useful in procuring the emancipation of our American brethren."

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PENAL LAWS. THEIR RECEPTION IN AMERICA

IN such a temper, and with such an example to guide them, the Houses of Parliament applied themselves to the question of the hour. When Privy Councillors, duly appointed to try an issue, had laughed the colonists out of court, it was not to be expected that the rank and file of a political assembly would grant them a patient, or even so much as a decent, hearing. England had open before her one policy which was prudent, and another which at the worst was not ignoble. Clemency and forbearance were her true wisdom; but, if she resolved to punish, she should have done so in a manner worthy of a great nation. The crime, since such it was adjudged to be, was common to the four chief cities of America. Philadelphia had led the way in voting for resistance. Charleston had followed suit; and it was not till weeks had elapsed that Boston, on the same day as New York, adopted the Resolutions which had been passed in Philadelphia. Those Resolutions had been made good in action, by each of the places concerned, with just as much or as little violence as under the circumstances of the special case was needed in order to do the work thoroughly. The British Ministry should have resorted to forgiveness and concession, or to a general and impartial severity. But neither of those two courses pleased the King and his advisers; and the opportunity was taken for exacting a vindictive penalty from one small, exposed, and (as it was believed) unwarlike and defenceless community.

Boston had done the same as the others, and had done it under the provocation of having been dragooned, in time of universal peace, for faults to which not one member of Parliament in ten could have put a name, if he had set his mind to think them over. But, where antipathy exists, men soon find reasons to justify it; and the drop-scene of the impending American drama, as presented to British eyes,

was a picture of the New England character daubed in colours which resembled the original as little as they matched each other. The men of Massachusetts were sly and turbulent, puritans and scoundrels, pugnacious ruffians and arrant cowards. That was the constant theme of the newspapers, and the favourite topic with those officers of the army of occupation whose letters had gone the round of clubs and country houses. The archives of the Secretary of State were full of trite calumnies and foolish prophecies. Bostonians, so Lord Dartmouth was informed by an officious correspondent, were not only the worst of subjects, but the most immoral of men. "If large and loud professions of the Gospel be an exact criterion of vital religion, they are the best people on earth. But if meekness, gentleness, and patience constitute any part, those qualities are not found there. If they could maintain a state of independence, they would soon be at war among themselves."<sup>1</sup> Such was the forecast with regard to a city whose inhabitants were destined through a long future to enjoy in quite exceptional measure the blessings of mutual esteem, and of the internal peace which results from it. It was a specimen of the predictions which at that moment obtained belief in Parliament and in the country.

The cue was given from above. On the seventh of March, 1774, Lord North communicated to the House of Commons a royal message, referring to the unwarrantable practices concerted and carried on in North America, and dwelling more particularly on the violent proceedings at the town and port of Boston in the province of Massachusetts Bay. The fact was that George the Third had seen General Gage, fresh from America; one of those mischievous public servants who know a colony so much better than the colonists know it themselves. "His language," said the King, "was very consonant to his character of an honest determined man. He says they will be lyons, whilst we are lambs; but, if we take the resolute part, they will undoubtedly prove very weak." His Majesty therefore desired Lord North not to repeat what he described as the fatal compliance of 1766,—that repeal of the Stamp Act to which, in the royal view, all the difficulties of the present situation were owing. The Minister was directed to send for the General, and hear his ideas on the mode of compelling the Bostonians to acquiesce submissively in whatever fate might be reserved for them.

The world soon learned what was in store for the unhappy city. On the fourteenth of March Lord North introduced a bill for closing

<sup>1</sup> *Dartmouth Manuscripts*, vol. ii., Letter of February, 1774.

its harbour and transferring the business of the Custom-house to the port of Salem. If the measure became law (so he foretold in the affected lightness of his heart), the presence of four or five frigates in Massachusetts Bay, without an additional regiment on Massachusetts soil, would at once place the guilty municipality for purposes of foreign trade at a distance of seventeen miles from the sea. Parliament might well be flattered by the assurance that, in the evenings of a week, it could do for the detriment of Boston four times that which the forces of nature had taken eighteen centuries to do for Ravenna. The Government majority was in a mood to believe anything. One of their number, to whom the House listened while those who spoke on behalf of the incriminated town were interrupted or silenced, declared that, if every dwelling in it was knocked about the ears of its townsmen, they would get no more than their deserts. He urged that that nest of locusts should be extirpated, and enforced his appeal by the famous sentence in which Cato adjured the Roman Senate to demolish Carthage. A poor little Carthage where every child attended school, and no man was a professional soldier; with its open streets, its unprotected quays, and a powerful force of legionaries already quartered in its citadel!

That was the first blow; and others fell in rapid succession. On the twenty-eighth of March the Prime Minister explained the plan of a measure by which he purposed to extinguish self-government in Massachusetts. The bill, stringent in the earlier draft, was altered for the harsher and the worse before it was laid on the table. Lord George Germaine, in whom, not so very long before, the Rockinghams had been fond enough to discern their possible parliamentary leader, commented upon the proposal of the Government as well meant, but far too weak. He cordially approved the provisions by which a town meeting might only be held under permission from the Governor. Why, he asked, should men of a mercantile cast collect together, and debate on political matters, when they ought to be minding their private business? But the bill would only cover half the ground, and the least important half, so long as the central Council of the Colony was a tumultuous rabble, meddling with affairs of State which they were unable to understand. That Council, in his opinion, should be reconstructed on the model of the House of Peers. Lord North thanked the orator, (and a real orator even his former friends admitted that on this occasion he had proved himself to be,) for a suggestion "worthy of his great mind." On the fifteenth of April the bill was



presented to the House with the addition of words enacting that the Council, in whose selection the Assembly under the existing constitution had a voice, should be nominated exclusively by the Crown.<sup>2</sup>

Governor Pownall, who had learned the institutions and geography of Massachusetts by ruling it on the spot, reminded the House that it was not a question of Boston only. If the measure was carried, local business could not be transacted in the furthest corner of Maine, unless special leave to hold a town-meeting had been obtained from a governor resident at the other end of three hundred miles of bad roads and forest tracks. Burke, very ill heard by an assembly which professed to regard a colonial Council as a riotous rabble, called in vain for the exercise of care and deliberation. They were engaged, he said, on nothing lighter than the proscription of a province: an undertaking which, whether they desired it or not, would expand itself ere long into the proscription of a nation. And Savile, begging that attention might be granted him during the length of a single sentence, exclaimed that a charter, which conveyed a sacred right, should not be broken without first hearing what might be put forward in defence of it by those who lived beneath its safeguard. But such considerations were not to the purpose of the audience. It was one of those moments when the talk and tone of society have greater influence than the arguments of debate; and a squire, who had recently been made a baronet, gave the House a sample of what passed current in the lobby as a valuable contribution towards the right understanding of the American question. Levelling principles, this gentleman affirmed, prevailed in New England, and he had the best of reasons for stating it. He had an acquaintance who called at a merchant's house in Boston, and asked the servant if his master was at home. "My master!" the man replied. "I have no master but Jesus Christ."

The bill for annulling the charter was accompanied by another for the Impartial Administration of Justice in Massachusetts Bay: which was a fine name for a law empowering the Governor, if any magistrate, revenue officer, or military man was indicted for murder, to send him to England for trial in the King's Bench. Barré and Conway challenged Lord North to produce a single example of a government servant who, having been charged with a capital offence, had suffered from the injustice of an American tribunal. They recalled to the mem-

<sup>2</sup> "It was a year," wrote Horace Walpole, "of fine harangues;" and he instanced especially Wedderburn against Franklin, Burke on the Tea-duty, and Lord George Germaine on the government of Massachusetts.—*Last Journals*, April, 1774.

ory of Parliament, (so short if the good deeds of those whom it disliked were in question,) how, at a time when public feeling in the colony was at a height which in the future never could be over-passed, Captain Preston and his soldiers, after the fairest of fair trials, had been acquitted by "an American jury, a New England jury, a Boston jury." And now it was proposed to remove the cognisance of grave political offences from a court without fear and without favour, to one which was notoriously ready,—as Wilkes had experienced,—to subserve the vengeance of Ministers, and which, if the occasion arose, would be even more willing to make itself the instrument of their misplaced lenity. The government supporters took no notice whatsoever of Captain Preston's acquittal, though it was a concrete instance so recent and so much in point that it ought to have coloured and permeated the entire discussion. After the usual fashion of a party which has plenty of votes, and no case, they wandered far and wide over the whole colonial controversy. The most admired speech was that of young Lord Caermarthen, who denied the right of Americans to complain that they were taxed without being represented, when such places as Manchester—and, he might have added, Leeds and Sheffield and Birmingham—had no members of their own in the British Parliament. It was indeed a magnificent anticipation of the calling in of the New World to balance the inequalities of the old. The debate was wound up by the gentleman who had compared Boston to Carthage. Speaking this time in English, he recommended the Government, if the people of Massachusetts did not take their chastisement kindly, to burn their woods, and leave their country open to the operations of the military. It was better, he said, that those regions should be ruined by our own soldiers than wrested from us by our rebellious children.

The effect of Lord Caermarthen's allusion to unrepresented Manchester, as justifying the taxation of unrepresented America, was so great that four days afterwards Burke thought it worthy of a refutation. "So then," he said, "because some towns in England are not represented, America is to have no representative at all. They are our children; but, when children ask for bread, we are not to give them a stone. When this child of ours wishes to assimilate to its parent, and to reflect with true filial resemblance the beauteous countenance of British liberty, are we to turn to them the shameful parts of our constitution? Are we to give them our weakness for their strength, our opprobrium for their glory?"

Even after the lapse of a century and a quarter these debates are not

pleasant reading for an Englishman. They went far to justify Turgot in his wonder that a country, which had cultivated with so much success all the branches of natural science, should remain so completely below itself in the science the most interesting of all, that of public happiness.<sup>3</sup> The best which could be said for the policy adopted by Parliament was that a great country should stand upon its rights against everybody, and at all hazards. But kindred States, like the members of a family, sometimes do well to refrain from insisting on advantages which the law, if strictly read, allows them to take. "There was a time," (wrote Philip Francis, putting into five lines the moral of the whole story,) "when I could reason as logically and passionately as anybody against the Americans; but, since I have been obliged to study the book of wisdom, I have dismissed logic out of my library. The fate of nations must not be tried by forms." Passion had more to do than logic with the undertaking which occupied the two Houses during the spring of 1774. If preambles spoke the truth, it should have been stated broadly and plainly at the head of each of those fatal bills that, whereas the inhabitants of the capital city of Massachusetts Bay had incurred the displeasure of his Majesty and this present Parliament, it was adjudged necessary and expedient to pay the colony out. That was the object aimed at; and it was pursued with all the disregard of appearances which had marked the proceedings of the same House of Commons in its crusade against the electors of Middlesex, and with still greater indifference to consequences. The members of the majority forgot that in the long run it did not lie with them to decide that Boston, and Boston alone, should have to answer for a course of conduct in which four colonies had taken part, and which commanded the sympathy of all the others. They credited communities of their own race and blood with the baseness of consenting to sit quiet while one of their number was ruined for having done its share loyally, if somewhat boisterously, in an enterprise to which all were pledged. In the optimism of their resentment they ignored human nature, and put out of their recollection the unanimity of America in her resistance to the Stamp Act. And in their heat and haste they thrust out of sight the dignity of debate, the rights of a parliamentary minority, and even a show of fair play towards the people whose freedom and prosperity they were intent on destroying.

The Americans who resided in London, or who found themselves there in the course of travel, petitioned that one of their cities should

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Turgot to Dr. Price, March 22, 1778.

not be visited with unexampled rigour before it was so much as apprised that any accusation had been brought against it. Their prayer was treated with silent contempt. But something more than silent contempt was required to stifle the voice of the true friends of England and of America within the walls of St. Stephen's. Insolence and intolerance not often before ran so high, or were directed against statesmen of such established character and standing. Barré had to sit down before he had finished his say. Conway, for the crime of imploring the House, in a very familiar Latin phrase, to hear the other side, was shouted down by men who had listened to a fool when he treated them to the quotation of "*Delenda est Carthago.*" When General Burgoyne expressed a wish, (and he had better reason than he then knew for wishing it,) to see America convinced by persuasion rather than the sword, the sentiment raised as great a storm as if it had been a piece of impudent disloyalty. Johnstone, a dashing sailor, who had been governor of Florida, contrived to tell the House that the work on which they were engaged would produce a confederacy of the colonies, and would end in a general revolt; but the roisterers on the benches opposite soon taught him that he had brought his knowledge of America to the wrong market.

Such was the treatment of men each of whom had used a pistol in battle, and was ready for one on very short notice in the ring of Hyde Park; for Johnstone was a noted fire-eater, and Burgoyne, though good-natured, never allowed a joke to go too far.<sup>4</sup> It may well be believed that things were still worse for civilians who had no better title to a respectful hearing than an acquaintance with the subject of debate, and a desire to place their views fairly and briefly before their colleagues. The speeches of ex-governor Pownall, of Alderman Sawbridge, and the other more persistent opponents of the ministerial policy were seldom allowed to die a natural death. Burke himself,

<sup>4</sup> During a contested election in Lancashire a party of Burgoyne's political opponents met in a bar-room, and devised a scheme for what they described as "trotting the General." A certain James Elton pulled out a valuable watch, and handed it to Burgoyne's servant, with the injunction that he should take it to his master, and request him to say whether he could tell the time of day. Burgoyne placed the watch on a tray together with a pair of pistols, and desired his man to bring it after him to the inn where the party was assembled. He went round the circle asking each of them whether he was the owner of the watch. When no one claimed it, Burgoyne turned to his servant and said, "Since the watch belongs to none of these gentlemen, you may take it and fob it in remembrance of the Swan Inn at Bolton." As any one who knew old Lancashire might readily believe, the real owner went by the name of Jemmy Trotter to his dying hour.



though he held the House while addressing it on bye-issues, had to contend against noise and ostentatious impertinence when he applied himself to the main question of the Government legislation. High-handed tactics are often at the time successful. The whole batch of measures—including a bill for removing the legal difficulties which hitherto had preserved the American householder from the infliction of having soldiers quartered under his private roof—were placed on the Statute-book without abridgment or essential alteration.

The third great blunder had now been committed; and, as in the two former cases, the effect was soon visible in a shape very different from what had been expected. The despatch of the troops led to the Boston massacre; the imposition and retention of the Tea-duty produced the world-famed scene in Boston harbour; and the result of the four penal Acts was to involve Great Britain in an unnecessary and unprofitable war with exactly as many powerful nations. The main responsibility rested with the Government and their followers; but the Opposition were not free from blame. They allowed the Address in reply to the royal message to pass unchallenged, and they let the Boston Port bill go through all its stages without calling for a division. They voted against the two other principal bills on the third reading, with about as much effect as if the governor of a fortress was to reserve the fire of his batteries until the enemy had carried their sap beyond the counterscarp. Cowed by the aspect of the benches in front of them, uncertain as to the feeling in the country, and afraid to put it to the test by giving a vigorous lead to those wiser tendencies which largely prevailed in the great commercial centers, they made a very poor fight in the Commons.<sup>5</sup> The House of Lords almost shone by comparison. Rockingham, who wanted self-confidence but not conviction, put force enough upon himself to take a prominent part in the debate; and in private he spared no remonstrances in order to keep in the path of duty those among his friends who showed hesitation. Lord Chatham was despondent, and most unhappy. "America," he wrote, "sits heavy on my mind. India is a perpetual source of regrets. There, where I have garnered up my heart, where our strength lay, and our happiest resources presented themselves, it is all changed into danger, weakness, distraction, and vulnerability." He was not well enough to take

<sup>5</sup> The landed property, except some of the most sensible, are, as natural, for violent measures. The interest of the commercial part is very decidedly on the other side, and their passions are taking that turn." Shelburne wrote thus to Chatham as early as April the Fourth, 1774.

a share in the earlier discussions; and his speech, when at length he broke silence, was rather a funeral oration over the departed peace and security of the Empire than a summons to political conflict.

But men do not look to the Upper House for the delay and mitigation of a coercion bill; and the Ministers won all along the line with an ease which surprised themselves, and even their royal master, who knew the probabilities of politics as well as any man alive. His jubilation had no bounds. In four separate letters he could not find an adjective short of "infinite" to express the measure of his satisfaction over every fresh proof of the irresolution displayed by the Opposition. But in his own view he owed them no thanks. Their feebleness and futility, (such were the epithets which he applied to them,) were an involuntary tribute to the irresistible excellence of the ministerial legislation, and only procured them his disdain without detracting anything from his displeasure. So far from being touched by their submissive conduct, he was all the more indignant if ever they showed a spark of spirit. When they spoke and voted in favour of receiving a petition from an American gentleman in London, a former agent for Massachusetts, who prayed that the fate of the colony might not be finally decided until letters had travelled to and fro across the water, the King pronounced that the Opposition had violated the laws of decency, but that nothing better was to be expected from men who were reduced to such low shifts. He had a right to enjoy his triumph. By sheer strength of purpose he had imposed his favourite measures on the Cabinet, and the Cabinet had carried them through Parliament as smoothly as—before Fox's day and after it, though not during it—bills for the restraint of the suppression of liberty so often passed.

Fox's day was not yet. Everybody was talking about him; and behind his back little was said that was complimentary, and a great deal that was abundantly silly. But some veterans of public life, who remembered their own mistakes and excesses at an age more advanced than his, regarded his future with hope, and his past with amused indulgence. Chatham had his notice called to the tattle which represented the ex-Lord of the Treasury as a premature intriguer, encouraged in his mutiny by certain members of the Cabinet, who in their turn had acted on a hint from the exalted quarter which was then called the Closet. "The part of Mr. Fox," wrote the old statesman, "must naturally beget speculations. It may however be all resolved, without going deeper, into youth and warm blood." At this point in his career, (said one who watched him narrowly and not unkindly,)

it was no longer a question of shining by speeches, for he could scarce outdo what he had done already. The work which lay before him was to retrieve his character by reforming it, to practise industry and application, and to court instead of to defy mankind.<sup>6</sup>

If Fox was to be of use to his generation, his position in the House of Commons had still to be made; and of that no one was more conscious than himself. Sorrow had caused him to think, and reflection had brought self-knowledge. He set no undue store on the gifts which came to him by nature, and he was acutely aware of the defects which were in full proportion to his extraordinary qualities. Strong in the unwonted sensation of being on his guard and his good behaviour, he at once adopted an independent but not a pretentious attitude, and maintained it with diligence, forethought, moderation, and even modesty. Leaving, as he safely could, the form of his speaking to take care of itself, he devoted his exclusive attention to the substance of it, and to the practical effect of the policy which he recommended. He began by a protest against the determination of the Speaker to exclude strangers from the gallery, so that a series of debates, which were to fix the destinies of the English-speaking world, might be conducted in secret conclave. He stoutly objected to the clause which vested the responsibility of reopening Boston harbour, whenever the time came for it, with the Crown instead of with Parliament. When, by way of answer, he was accused of desiring to rob the King of his most valued prerogative, the opportunity of showing mercy, he allowed the courtly argument to pass without satirical comment. He contented himself with insisting that his motion to omit that clause, together with another which was more questionable still, should be put and negatived; in order that it might stand on record in the journals how, amidst the general panic, at least one member of Parliament had objected to something which the Government had demanded.

Fox spoke briefly, but not infrequently, on the other bills relating to America; more especially when their details were being arranged in Committee. On the nineteenth of April the House of Commons considered a motion to repeal the Tea-duty, which was brought forward by a private member. Burke signalled the evening by a splendid oration. Assisted by a comparison of the notes furtively taken by various honourable gentlemen in the crown of their hats, he subse-

<sup>6</sup> Chatham to Shelburne, March 6, 1774. *Last Journals of Walpole*, February, 1774.

quently wrote it out from memory, and saved it for a world which must otherwise have been the poorer. The Government supporters would have refused to listen to Cicero denouncing Antony, if the performance had trenched upon the Government time; but, as it was an off-night, they gave themselves up with a clear conscience for two livelong hours to the enjoyment of the speech. Among other notable passages it contained a biographical account of Charles Townshend as copious as the discourse of an incoming French Academician over his deceased predecessor. Even after such a feast of rhetoric they were willing to hear Charles Fox, though they would hear no one else on the same side. The latest words of reason which the House accepted before it went to a division, (and both Barré and Burgoyne tried to address it,) were those in which the young man defined the case in language as plain as his exposition of it was accurate and adequate. A tax, he said, could only be laid for three purposes: as a commercial regulation, for the raising of revenue, or in order to assert a right. As to the first two purposes, the Minister denied that he had them even in mind; while the so-called right of taxation was asserted with the intention of justifying an armed interference on the part of Great Britain, with the inevitable consequence of irritating the American colonies into open rebellion.

For the first time in his life Fox looked only to what was just and prudent in speech and action; and he did not endeavour or expect to attract a personal following. One sworn partisan he always was sure of having. Poor Stephen's heart was in the right place in his great body. He stood by his brother through the darkest hour of his fortunes, and attended him gallantly and jauntily in his wise endeavours, as he had so often done in his hare-brained courses. In the House, which was almost identical with the fashionable world, Stephen was something of a favourite in spite of his faults, and even, it is to be feared, on account of them. He took his share in the uphill conflict; and on the second of May, when the Charter of Massachusetts was under consideration, he delivered himself in phrases which were worthy of his father's son in their manly common sense, and of his son's father in their broad humanity. "I rise, sir," he said, "with an utter detestation and abhorrence of the present measures. We are either to treat the Americans as subjects or as rebels. If we treat them as subjects, the bill goes too far; if as rebels, it does not go far enough. We have refused to hear the parties in their defence, and we are go-



ing to destroy their charter without knowing the constitution of their Government."

Those were the last sentences which Stephen Fox is known to have uttered in public; for in two months he was a peer, and within seven months he died. By that time Charles had made good his ground in public estimation, and had secured a solid base of operations from which he was soon to advance fast and far. Parliament was very ready to forget and forgive in the case of a scion of an old and famous parliamentary family. He had not tried to shine; he had placed to his account no transcendent effort; and his colleagues liked him all the better for his self-suppression, and admired him none the less. But, whenever he addressed the House, he had proved himself its potential master. Amidst a tempest of violence and prejudice he alone among the opponents of the Government never condescended to begin with an apology, and never sate down without having driven home all that he wished to say. He had vindicated his right to argue a coercion bill as he would have argued anything else, refusing to recognise the hackneyed plea of public safety as an excuse for hurry and slovenliness, and sturdily declining to mend his pace under the pressure of public anger. Having espoused the right cause, and fought for it like one who was not ashamed of it, he brought an increased reputation and an established authority out of as sorry a business as Parliament had ever been engaged in. But he was powerless to amend the Government measures. The whole of the baleful harvest was safely garnered; and—amidst the Acts for paving and lighting streets, and for widening and repairing county roads, with which the Statute-book of 1774, like any other, is crowded—we still may read, in faded black and dingy white, the dry and conventional text of those famous laws that in their day set half the world on fire.

For the matter did not end when the bills had received the Royal Assent. There was an opposition beyond the seas which was not kept from speaking out by the fear of being called factious. The same ships that took over copies of the Port Act, carried a parcel of Bibles and prayer-books which Dartmouth entrusted for distribution to a clergyman of Philadelphia, who wrote to report the effect produced upon public opinion by the two consignments. Personally the good man expressed nothing but gratitude towards his Lordship. The books had been bestowed on those for whom they were intended, and there was every sign that they would be blessed to the congregation. But consternation prevailed in Boston on hearing that their harbour was to

be blocked up, and all the colonies seemed to be united in opposing the authority of Parliament.<sup>7</sup>

The worthy divine was correct in his reading of the situation. But though a Pennsylvanian, whose judgment was unclouded by the imminence of a terrible and incalculable danger, might already regard it as certain that the whole of America would make common cause, the future presented itself under a more dubious aspect to dwellers in the threatened city. "We have not men fit for the times," said John Adams in his private diary. "We are deficient in genius, in education, in travel, in fortune, in everything. I feel unutterable anxiety. God grant us wisdom and fortitude! Should this country submit, what infamy and ruin! Death, in any form, is less terrible." That was written for his own eyes alone; but the hour was too grave, and the men and the women around him too clear-sighted and resolute, for him to mince the truth even when writing to others. He reminded James Warren of Plymouth, who was as deep in the troubled waters as himself, of the ugly historical fact that people circumstanced like them had seldom grown old, or died in their beds. And to his wife he wrote: "We live, my dear soul, in an age of trial. What will be the consequence I know not. The town of Boston, for aught I can see, must suffer martyrdom. Our principal consolation is that it dies in a noble cause." That was the spirit in which the cowards of Boston met the announcement that they must bow their heads to the yoke, or fight against such odds as the world had never seen. The last time that Great Britain had exerted her full strength, she had beaten the French by land on three continents; had established over France and Spain together an immeasurable superiority at sea; and had secured for herself everything in both hemispheres which was best worth taking. Boston, on the other hand, contained five and thirty hundred able-bodied citizens; and, in the view of her enemies, no population was ever composed of worse men and poorer creatures. So George the Third, his Ministers, and his army firmly believed; and they engaged in the struggle armed with all the moral advantage which such a conviction gives.

Before America could be loyal to the people of Boston, it had first to be shown whether the people of Boston were true to themselves. On the tenth of May the intelligence arrived that the Assembly was henceforward to sit, and the business of administration to be carried on, in the town of Salem; and that the Custom-house was to be removed to

<sup>7</sup> The Revd. William Stringer to Lord Dartmouth, May 14, 1774.

Marblehead, the principal landing place in Salem harbour. Three days afterwards General Gage arrived in Massachusetts Bay, with full powers as civil governor of the colony, and as Commander-in-Chief for the whole continent. During those three days the Committees of Correspondence which represented Boston and eight neighbouring villages had quietly, and rather sadly, taken up the glove which the giant Empire had contemptuously flung to them. They had got ready their appeal to all the Assemblies of the continent, inviting a universal suspension of exports and imports; promising to suffer for America with a becoming fortitude; confessing that singly they might find their trial too severe; and entreating that they might not be left to struggle alone, when the very existence of every colony, as a free people, depended upon the event. Brave words they were, and the inditing of them at such a moment was in itself a deed; but something more than pen and ink was required to parry the blows which were now showered upon the town, and upon the State of which it had already ceased to be the capital.

On the first of June the blockade of the harbour was proclaimed, and the ruin and starvation of Boston at once began. The industry of a place which lived by building, sailing, freighting, and unloading ships was annihilated in a single moment. The population, which had fed itself from the sea, would now have to subsist on the bounty of others, conveyed across great distances by a hastily devised system of land-carriage in a district where the means of locomotion were unequal to such a burden. A city which conducted its internal communications by boat almost as much as Venice, and quite as much as Stockholm, was henceforward divided into as many isolated quarters as there were suburbs with salt or brackish water lying between them. "The law," Mr. Bancroft writes in his *History*, "was executed with a rigour that went beyond the intentions of its authors. Not a scow could be manned by oars to bring an ox or a sheep or a bundle of hay from the islands. All water carriage from pier to pier, though but of lumber or bricks or kine, was forbidden. The boats that plied between Boston and Charlestown could not ferry a parcel of goods across Charles River. The fishermen of Marblehead, when they bestowed quintals of dried fish on the poor of Boston, were obliged to transport their offerings in waggons by a circuit of thirty miles."<sup>8</sup> Lord North, when he pledged himself to place Boston at a distance of seventeen miles from the sea, had been almost twice as good as his word.

<sup>8</sup> Bancroft's *History of the United States of America*, Epoch Third, chapter iv.

In a fortnight's time, as soon as the pinch began to be felt, the troops came back into the town, sore and surly, and a standing camp for two battalions was established on Boston Common. Relief, or hope of relief, there was none. Long before the summer was over the constitution would be abolished; the old Councillors would be displaced by Government nominees; and criminal and civil cases would be tried by judges whose salaries the Crown paid, and by juries which the Crown had packed. The right of petition remained; but it was worth less than nothing. A respectful statement of abuses, and a humble prayer for their redress, was regarded by the King and the Cabinet as a form of treason all the more offensive because it could not be punished by law. "When I see," said Franklin, "that complaints of grievances are so odious to Government that even the mere pipe which conveys them becomes obnoxious, I am at a loss to know how peace and union are to be maintained or restored." A few weeks, or days, remained in which the free voice of the country could still be heard; and there were those who intended to take good care that its latest accents should mean something. Early in June the Assembly met at Salem. On the seventeenth of the month the House, behind locked doors, and with an attendance larger by a score than any that had yet been known, took into consideration the question of inviting the thirteen colonies to a general Congress. The Governor's secretary, on the wrong side of the keyhole, read a message proclaiming that the Assembly was dissolved; but, when those who had entered the room as senators filed out in their character of private citizens, the work was past undoing. The place named for the Congress was Philadelphia; the date was to be the first of September; and the five delegates for Massachusetts had all been duly elected, including the pair of statesmen whom Massachusetts Tories, by way of depreciation, pleased themselves by calling the brace of Adamses.<sup>9</sup>

The note had been sounded sharp and clear, and the response followed like an echo. The first to rally were those who had the most to gain by standing aloof. James the Second, in the matter of the Declaration of Indulgence, had failed to discover a bribe which would tempt the English Nonconformists to assist him in persecuting even those who had persecuted them; and their descendants across the seas

<sup>9</sup> The name was started by an old ex-governor in 1770, in a sentence which began with the flavour of a Biblical reminiscence, but ran off into another strain. "Mr. Cushing I know, and Mr. Hancock I know; but where the devil this brace of Adamses came from I know not."



had not degenerated. In Marblehead and Salem together there were not found eighty individuals, all told, who cared to play the part of wreckers in the disaster which had befallen the good ship Boston. A much larger number of their fellow-townsmen, in an address to General Gage, repudiated any intention of being seduced by the prospect of their own advantage into complicity with a course of action which, whether unjust or not from the point of view of the Government, would on their own part be to the last degree ungracious and unfriendly. "We must," they said, "be lost to all feelings of humanity, could we indulge one thought to raise our fortunes on the ruin of our suffering neighbours." To the Boston merchants they offered the gratuitous use of their wharves and warehouses, and promised to lade and unlade Boston goods for nothing. And indeed they very soon took the opportunity of the arrival from London of a bark with chests of tea on board to treat the cargo in Boston fashion, and so disqualify themselves for any further marks of Royal and Ministerial favour.

Salem and Marblehead were forced by their circumstances to declare themselves at once; and, as the provisions of the Act for regulating the government of Massachusetts were successively put in force, the townships of the colony, one after another, eagerly followed suit. The new councillors were appointed on the King's writ of mandamus, and twenty-five among them accepted the office. It was the worst day's work they had ever done for themselves; for their cause; and for the peace, and in some unfortunate cases for the fair reputation, of the neighbourhood in which they severally resided. For popular feeling ran high and fierce; and their countrymen were determined that they should not serve, to whatever lengths it might be necessary to go in order to prevent them. Two thousand men marched in companies on to the common at Worcester, escorting one of their townsmen whose abilities and personal popularity had recommended him to the notice of the Government, and formed a hollow square around him while, with uncovered head, he read the resignation of his seat at the council board. George Watson of Plymouth, who, in the stately language of the day, "possessed almost every virtue that can adorn and dignify the human character," made known his intention of assuming the proffered dignity. On the next Sunday forenoon, when he took his accustomed place in the meeting-house, his friends and familiar associates put on their hats and walked out beneath the eyes of the congregation. As they passed him he bent his head over the handle of

his cane; and, when the time arrived, he declined the oath of qualification. More violent methods, which in certain cases did not stop short of grotesque and even brutal horseplay, were employed against less respected or more determined men. Of thirty-six who had received the King's summons, the majority either refused obedience from the first, or were persuaded or intimidated into withdrawing their consent to join the Council. The rest took sanctuary with the garrison in Boston; and the tidings which came from their homes in the country districts made it certain that they would do very well to stay there.

The immediate vicinity of the soldiers was a preventive against outrages of which the best of the patriots were heartily ashamed; but no body of troops could be large enough, or near enough, to deter New Englanders from acting as if they still possessed those municipal rights of which they had been deprived without a hearing. General Gage issued a proclamation warning all persons against attending town-meetings; and town-meetings were held regularly, and were attended by larger numbers than ever. The men of Salem, towards whom he had special reasons for being unwilling to proceed to extremities, walked into the Town-house under his eyes, and between footways lined with his soldiers. Boston, whose character in official quarters had long been gone, was obliged to be more cautious. When called to account by the Governor, the Selectmen admitted that a meeting had been held; but it was a meeting (so they argued) which had been adjourned from a date anterior to the time when the Act came into force. Gage, who saw that, if this theory was accepted, the same meeting by means of repeated adjournments might be kept alive till the end of the century, reported the matter to his Council. The new Councillors pronounced themselves unable to advise him on a point of law,—that law which already had ceased to have force beyond the reach of a British bayonet;—but they took occasion to lay before him the disordered condition of the province, and the cruel plight to which his policy had reduced themselves.

When the day came round for the Courts of Justice to sit in their remodelled shape, the Judges were treated more tenderly as regarded their persons than the mandamus councillors, but with quite as little reverence for their office. They took their seats at Boston only to learn that those citizens who had been returned as jurors one and all refused the oath. A great multitude marched into Springfield, with drums and trumpets, and hoisted a black flag over the Court-house, as a sign of what any one might expect who entered it in an official capacity.

At Worcester the members of the tribunal with all their staff walked in procession, safe and sorry, through a quarter of a mile of street lined on each side by people drawn up six deep. These militia-men (for such they were) had their company officers to command them, and wanted nothing to make them a military force except the fire-arms which were standing ready at home, and which two out of every three amongst them could handle more effectively than an average European soldier. Wherever the Judges went, if once they were fairly inside a town, they were not allowed to leave it until they had plighted their honour that they would depart without transacting any legal business. After a succession of such experiences the Chief Justice and his colleagues waited upon the Governor, and represented to him that they must abandon the pretence of exercising their functions in a Province where there were no jurymen to listen to their charges, and where they could not even sit in court to do nothing unless the approaches were guarded by the best part of a brigade of British infantry.

The process of bringing Massachusetts into line with the Revolution was harsh, and sometimes ruthless. So far as any public opinion opposed to their own was in question, the patriots went on the principle of making the Province a solitude, and calling it unanimity. The earliest sufferers were Government servants. Clark Chandler, the Registrar of Probate at Worcester, had entered on the local records a remonstrance against action taken by the more advanced politicians among the citizens. He was called upon in open town-meeting to erase the inscription from the books; and when he showed signs of reluctance, his fingers were dipped in ink, and drawn to and fro across the page. The chaise of Benjamin Hallowell, a Commissioner of Customs, was pursued into Boston at a gallop by more than a hundred and fifty mounted men. Jonathan Sewall is known in the school histories of America as the recipient of a famous confidence. It was to him that John Adams, after they had travelled together as far as the parting of the ways, used those words of spirited tautology: "Swim or sink, live or die, survive or perish with my country is my unalterable determination." Unfortunately for himself, Sewall was a law officer of the Crown as well as a bosom friend of the Crown's adversary. His elegant house in Cambridge was attacked by the mob. He was forced to retire to Boston, and subsequently to Europe, where, after long struggles and many sorrows, he died of a broken heart.

These were official people; but their fate was shared by private gen-

tllemen whose sins against liberty did not go beyond some rather violent and foolish ebullitions of speech. This one had hoped that the rebels would swing for it. That one had said that he should be glad to see the blood streaming from the hearts of the popular leaders; and, in a milder mood, had contented himself with wishing that they might become turnspits in the kitchens of the English nobility. Another, while it was still a question whether Massachusetts should resist or accept her punishment tractably, had a child baptized by the name of "Submit." Angry and idle—for their life was now and henceforward one of enforced and unwelcome leisure—they talked recklessly; though most of them would not of their own accord have hurt a fly, let alone a fellow-citizen. They crowded the inns and boarding-houses of Boston, and the spare chambers of their city friends; lingering on the very edge of the ocean before they started on a much longer flight, from which for most of them there was no returning.

Among those who had been expelled from their homes were some of the richest landowners in the province,—men who would have added respectability and distinction to any aristocracy in the world. Colonel Saltonstall was a good soldier, a just magistrate, and a kind neighbour; but the mob of his district would not allow him to stay, and he went first to Boston, and then into exile. He refused to bear arms for the Crown, against so many old friends who would gladly have marched and fought under him if he had found it in his conscience to take service with the Continental army. He felt to the full such consolation as was afforded by the thought that he had done nothing with which to reproach himself. "I have had more satisfaction," he wrote from England, "in a private life here than I should have had in being next in command to General Washington." The Vassalls were a family of worth and honour, one of whom was grandfather of the Lady Holland who kept a salon and a dining-table for the Whigs of the great Reform Bill. John Vassall of Cambridge had no choice but to cross the seas with his kindred. His great property in Massachusetts was ultimately confiscated, after having been subjected to a course of systematised spoliation. His mansion-house at Cambridge became the headquarters of the American army. The Committee of Safety published a succession of orders, carefully regulating the distribution of the produce on his estate; and the Provincial Congress solemnly voted half a pint of rum a day to the persons employed on cutting his crops, and those of his fellow-refugees. Isaac Royall of Medford, to whom hospitality was a passion, and the affection of all



around him, high and low, the prize which he coveted, did not escape banishment and proscription. It was lightly but cruelly said by his political opponents that to carry on his farms in his absence was not an easy matter; "for the honest man's scythe refused to cut Tory grass, and his oxen to turn a Tory furrow." During the dreary years which lay before him, his cherished wish was to be buried in Massachusetts; but that boon was denied him. He died in England, before the war was over, bequeathing two thousand acres of his neglected soil to endow a Chair in the famous university of his native province which he himself was never permitted to revisit.

Women, whatever might be their opinions, were not uncivilly treated. The habitual chivalry of Americans was extended to every applicant for the benefit of it, even if she might not always have been the most estimable of her sex. There was in Massachusetts a dame of quality, who once had a face which contemporaries described as of "matchless beauty," and a story very closely resembling that of the notorious Lady Hamilton. She had been the companion of a wealthy baronet, Collector of the customs for the Port of Boston. Those customs, with the license accorded to favoured place-holders before the Revolution, he had contrived to collect while residing at his ease in the South of Europe. He was frightened into marriage by the earthquake of Lisbon; and after his death the widow returned to America, to her late husband's country house, where he had maintained what, for the New England of that day, was a grand and lavish establishment. When the troubles grew serious she was alarmed by the attitude of the rural population, and asked leave to retire to Boston. The Provincial Congress furnished her with an escort, and passed a special Resolution permitting her to take into the city her horses, carriages, live-stock, trunks, bedding, and provisions. They detained nothing of hers except arms and ammunition, for which the lady had little use, and the patriots much. She got safe into Boston, and safe out of it to England, where she closed her career as the wife of a county banker.

Amenities such as these were not for every day or every person. There was one class of Government partisans which, in particular, fared very badly. It was frequently the case that a clergyman, accustomed to deal out instruction, held it incumbent upon him to inform laymen about matters in which they did not desire his guidance. Old Doctor Byles of Boston, though a stout loyalist, had the good sense never to bring affairs of state inside the porch of his church. "In the first place," he told his people, "I do not understand politics. In the

second place you all do, every man and mother's son of you. In the third place you have politics all the week, so pray let one day in the seven be devoted to religion. In the fourth place I am engaged on infinitely higher work. Name to me any subject of more consequence than the truth I bring to you, and I will preach on it the next Sabbath." That was his theory of duty; and it carried him unhurt, though not unthreatened, over the worst of the bad times. He continued to reside, through the war and for years after, in his native city; and he kept it alive by excellent jokes which no one relished more than the Whig officials who were usually the subjects of them. But others of his cloth were less prudent. Every minister of religion who opposed the Crown was inciting his congregation to armed revolt in the vein and often with the very phrases of the Old Testament Prophets; and for the ministers who supported the Crown to keep unbroken silence was more than human or clerical nature could endure. They delivered their souls, and were not long in discovering that those to whom they preached had no attribute of a flock about them except the name. One outspoken clergyman had bullets fired into his house. The pulpit of another was nailed up, and with some excuse, for he had announced from it that colonists who were shot by the royal soldiers would find that their punishment did not end in this life. A third, whose hearers complained that "his Toryism was most offensive," was put into the village pound and had herrings thrown over for him to eat. The physicians as a rule adhered to the Crown; but, whatever might be the case with the spiritual needs of parishioners, the bodily health of citizens, actual and prospective, was not to be trifled with. The person of a medical man was very generally respected, and his property spared. The most dutiful Son of Liberty was willing to excuse his own forbearance by the explanation that doctors were indebted to their immunity from disciplinary treatment to "the exigencies of the ladies."

Massachusetts had stood by Boston; and it was soon evident that all the other colonies would stand by Massachusetts. The Port Act was carried through the American townships as swiftly as the rumour of a great disaster pervades the bazaars of India. It was printed on mourning paper, with a black border; it was cried about the streets as a Barbarous Murder; it was solemnly burned in the presence of vast crowds of people. The first of June was kept in Philadelphia with peals of muffled bells, and colours half-mast high on the river, and the shutters up from dawn to dark in ninety houses out of every hun-

dred. The Assembly of Virginia set the day apart for humiliation, prayer, and fasting. But the colonies found more effectual means of relieving Boston than by sharing her abstinence. South Carolina sent two hundred barrels of rice, with eight hundred more to follow. In North Carolina, Wilmington raised two thousand pounds in a few days,—the sum which much about the same time a fashionable Club was spending at Ranelagh on a Masquerade that was the wonder of the London season.<sup>10</sup> To convey the contributions of the little seaport a ship was offered freight free, and a crew volunteered to make the voyage without wages. The less remote districts of New England kept Boston supplied with portable and perishable victuals; and the class of food which could travel on foot came over many leagues of road and not seldom from places which could badly spare it. Two hundred and fifty-eight sheep were driven in from one town in Connecticut, and two hundred and ninety from another. Israel Putnam brought a flock of six or seven score from his remote parish, and did not fail to show himself on the Common, where he could enjoy the sight of more soldiers together than he had seen since he fought by Lord Howe at Ticonderoga. The British officers, who liked him well, suggested that they must owe the pleasure of his visit to his having sniffed powder in the air. They told him that he very soon might have it to his heart's content, as they were expecting twenty ships of the line and as many regiments from England. "If they come," said the old fellow, gravely, "I am prepared to treat them as enemies."<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, Putnam's colony was full of fight. Besides bringing in sheep and bullocks, the men of Connecticut brought themselves and their cudgels in even greater numbers whenever it was known that the Massachusetts Judges were going to hold a Court within a long day's walk of the border-line between the two provinces. The clearest eye in America already discerned that the time was at hand when men would be wanted as much as money or provisions, and a great deal

<sup>10</sup> "Last night was the triumph of Boodle's. Our Masquerade cost two thousand guineas. A sum which might have fertilised a Province vanished in a few hours." So Gibbon wrote on May the Fourth, 1774, while he was still to all outward appearance a fine gentleman and nothing more. "For my own part," he said, "I subscribe, but am very indifferent about it. A few friends, and a great many books, entertain me; but I think fifteen hundred people the worst company in the world."

<sup>11</sup> The first five chapters of Bancroft's Third Epoch relate, comprehensively and minutely, the uprising of the American colonies in consequence of the Penal Acts of 1774. The severities exercised against the friends of Government, which form the unpleasant side of the story, are most fairly and effectively told by Mr. Lorenzo Sabine in his *Biographical Sketches of the Loyalists of the Revolution*.

more than votes of sympathy. Patriotic circles were discoursing freely about the excellence of the oratory in the Colonial Convention of Virginia. Enthusiastic members of that Convention had assured John Adams, (who was accustomed to hear the same about himself from his own fellow-townsmen,) that Richard Henry Lee and Patrick Henry would respectively bear comparison with Cicero and with Demosthenes. But a shrewd delegate from South Carolina, who on his way to Congress had looked in at Williamsburg to see what they were doing in the Old Dominion, gave it as his opinion that the most eloquent speech had been made by Colonel Washington. "I will raise," that officer had said, "one thousand men towards the relief of Boston, and subsist them at my own expense." It was a sound Anglo-Saxon version of the march of the Marseillais. If they knew how to die, he would see that in the meanwhile they should know where they could get something to eat.

But above all, and before all, the proposal of a Congress met with eager acceptance on the part of twelve out of the thirteen colonies. They took care to make convenient for themselves both the day and the locality which Massachusetts had indicated. On the tenth of August the delegates who had been chosen at Salem set forth on their journey from Boston. The spaces which they had to traverse, and the welcome which everywhere greeted them, brought home to their minds for the first time a comfortable assurance that the task of subjugating such a country, inhabited by such a people, would possibly require more months and a great many more regiments than had been allotted to it in the anticipations of the British War Office. Everywhere on their passage bells were ringing, cannons firing, and men, women, and children crowding "as if to a coronation." When John Adams was an old gentleman, it took much to make him angry; but he never allowed any doubt to be thrown, in his presence, on the enthusiasm which attended himself and his colleagues during their progress to Philadelphia in the summer of 1774. The only time that his grandson ever incurred the indignation of the ex-President "was by his expression of surprise at the extent of those ceremonies, which he happened to find set forth in high colours in an old newspaper. He was then a boy, and knew no better. But he never forgot the reproof."

The material comforts which awaited the Bostonians in ever greater profusion as they journeyed southwards were matter of constantly renewed surprise and satisfaction, tempered by an inward sense of stern superiority at the recollection of the plain but invigorating fare



which they had left behind them. New York, free-hearted as now, would not let them go forward on their way until they had devoted six evenings to rest and refreshment, and as many days to seeing the sights;—the view from the steeple of the New Dutch church; St. Paul's, with its piazza and pillars, which had cost eighteen thousand pounds, in York money; and the statue of his Majesty on horseback in the bowling green, of solid lead gilded with gold, which had still two years to stand on the marble pedestal before it was pulled down to be run into bullets. They rode on through New Jersey, which they thought a paradise; as indeed it was, and as it remained until the Hessians had been allowed their will on it. They halted for a Sunday at Princeton College, where the scholars studied very hard, but sang very badly in chapel, and where the inmates, from the president downwards, were as high sons of liberty as any in America. They went on their course from town to city, honouring toasts; hearing sermons; recording the text from which the clergyman preached, and observing whether or not he spoke from notes; admiring the public buildings, and carefully writing down what they cost in currency of the colony. At the "pretty village" of Trenton they were ferried over the Delaware, in the opposite direction from that in which it was to be crossed on the December night when the tide of war showed the first faint sign of turning. On the nineteenth afternoon they entered Philadelphia, where they were housed and feasted with a cordiality which in those early days of the Revolution had the air of being universal, and with a luxury which threw even the glories of New York into the shade. They had known what it was to breakfast in a villa on Hudson's River with "a very large silver coffee pot, a very large silver tea pot, napkins of the finest materials, plates full of choice fruit, and toast and bread-and-butter in great perfection." But in Philadelphia—whether it was at the residence of a Roman Catholic gentleman, with ten thousand a year in sterling money, "reputed the first fortune in America"; or the Chief Justice of the Province; or a young Quaker lawyer and his pretty wife—there was magnificence, and, above all, abundance under many roofs. "A most sinful feast again," John Adams wrote. "Everything which could delight the eye or allure the taste. Curds and creams, jellies, sweetmeats of various sorts, twenty sorts of tarts, fools, trifles, floating islands, and whipped sillabubs." These dainties were washed down by floods of Madeira, more undeniable than the political principles of some among their hosts. For, as was proved just three years later, when red-coats were seated round the same tables, Philadelphia

loved to place her best before her visitors, quite irrespective of whether or not they were trusty patriots. But for the present the opinions of the entertainers seemed as sound as their wine, and gushed as freely. At elegant suppers, where the company drank sentiments till near midnight, might be heard such unexceptionable aspirations as: "May Britain be wise, and America be free!" "May the fair dove of liberty, in this deluge of despotism, find rest to the sole of her foot on the soil of America!" "May the collision of British flint and American steel produce that spark of liberty which shall illuminate the latest posterity!"

Philadelphia was destined in the course of the war to play the important, if not very noble, part of serving as a Capua to the British army; but the men of the first Congress were of a political fibre which was proof against any enervating influences. They fell to work forthwith, and their labours were continuous, severe, and admirably adapted to the particularities of the situation. Possessed of no constitutional authority to legislate or govern, they passed, after searching debate and minute revision, Resolutions which had the moral force of laws and the practical effect of administrative decrees. On the eighth of October they put on record "that this Congress approve the opposition of the Massachusetts Bay to the late Acts of Parliament; and if the same shall be attempted to be carried into execution by force, all America ought to support them in their opposition." They then proceeded to draw up a Declaration of Rights, claiming for the American people in their provincial assemblies a free and exclusive power of legislation on all matters of taxation and internal policy, and calling for the repeal, in whole or in part, of eleven Acts of Parliament by which that claim was infringed. They unanimously agreed not to import any merchandise from the mother-country; but, like wary men of business, they gave themselves another twelve-month during which American goods might be exported to Great Britain, if Great Britain chose to take them.

One class of imports was prohibited specifically, unconditionally, and apart from all considerations of politics. "We will," so Congress proclaimed, "neither import, nor purchase any slave imported, after the first day of December next; after which time we will wholly discontinue the slave trade." The pledge was binding upon all, but it bore the special stamp of Virginia. The Assembly of that colony had over and over again framed and carried, in condemnation of the slave trade, laws which had over and over again been disallowed by the royal veto, enforced on one occasion by a personal and emphatic expression of the royal anger. It is melancholy to reflect what the social

condition and the political history of Virginia might have been if the home Government had allowed free play to the generous impulses which actuated her public men before the Revolutionary war. They liked to be told high and hard truths, and were prepared to act them out in practice. "Every gentleman here is born a petty tyrant. Taught to regard a part of our own species in the most abject and contemptible degree below us, we lose that idea of the dignity of man which the hand of Nature hath planted in us for great and useful purposes. Habituated from our infancy to trample upon the rights of human nature, every liberal sentiment is enfeebled in our minds; and in such an infernal school are to be educated our future legislators and rulers." That was how in 1773 a Virginian representative discoursed openly to his fellows. No such speech could have been made with impunity in the State Legislature during the generation which preceded the Secession of 1861.

And finally, knowing by repeated experience that for Americans to petition Parliament was only to court their own humiliation, Congress laid formality aside, and published a direct appeal to all true and kindly Englishmen. The people of Great Britain, (so the document ran,) had been led to greatness by the hand of liberty; and therefore the people of America, in all confidence, invoked their sense of justice, prayed for permission to share their freedom, and anxiously protested against the calumny that the colonies were aiming at separation under the pretence of asserting the right of self-government. Chatham, after confiding to the House of Lords that his favourite study had been the political literature of "the master-countries of the world," declared and avowed that the resolutions and addresses put forth by the Congress at Philadelphia, "for solidity of reasoning, force of sagacity, and wisdom of conclusion, under such a complication of difficult circumstances," were surpassed by no body of men, of any age and nation, who had ever issued a state paper. A contemporary Scotch journalist described these productions as written with so much spirit, sound reason, and true knowledge of the constitution, that they had given more uneasiness than all the other proceedings of the Congress.<sup>12</sup>

The rate of speed at which compositions of that excellence were devised, drafted, criticised, amended, and sanctioned appears enviable to the member of a modern representative assembly; but it fell short of what satisfied men accustomed to the succinct methods of a New

<sup>12</sup> The passage referred to in the text is quoted by Professor Tyler in chapter xv. of his *Literary History*.

England town-meeting, and for whom Philadelphia was a place of honourable but, as it seemed to them, almost interminable exile. As early as the tenth of October John Adams wrote: "The deliberations of the Congress are spun out to an immeasurable length. There is so much wit, sense, learning, acuteness, subtlety, and eloquence among fifty gentlemen, each of whom has been habituated to lead and guide in his own Province, that an immensity of time is spent unnecessarily." The end was not far off. On the twentieth of the month the Pennsylvanian Assembly entertained Congress at a dinner in the City Tavern. The whole table rose to the sentiment, "May the sword of the parent never be stained with the blood of her children!" Even the Quakers who were present drained their glasses on the ground that it was not a toast, but a prayer; and a prayer which was much to their own liking. Six days afterwards Congress dissolved itself. The tenth of May was appointed for the meeting of its successor; and the Canadian colonies and the Floridas were invited to send representatives. Two days more, and the Massachusetts delegates mounted for their homeward journey. "We took our departure," said Adams, "in a very great rain, from the happy, the peaceful, the elegant, the hospitable and polite city of Philadelphia. It is not very likely that I shall ever visit this part of the world again, but I shall ever retain a most grateful sense of the many civilities I have received in it, and shall think myself happy to have an opportunity of returning them." Events were at hand of such a nature that to set a limit to what was likely needed more than human foresight. John Adams had not seen Philadelphia for the last time, by many; and the return dinners with which he requited her hospitality were given by him as President of seventeen States and six millions of people.

*Trevelyan now introduces the new Parliament brought to power in the general election of 1774. Its predecessor elected in the spring of 1768, "chosen amidst an orgy of corruption," claims title to remembrance by its long battle with the Middlesex electors and by its forfeiting the loyalty of America. However, the unwept Parliament did accomplish one constructive piece of business. It set up a quasi-judicial process for determining election disputes. Although overt corruption in the boroughs may have been restrained as a result of the new Corrupt Practices Act, the House of Commons that was returned would be no less compliant than the last.*



## CHAPTER V

### THE KING AND LORD CHATHAM. FOX COMES TO THE FRONT. THE AMERICAN FISHERIES

THE King had long ago settled his policy. "I am clear," he announced to Lord North in the previous September, "that there must always be one tax to keep up the right, and as such I approve of the Tea Duty." To secure this object he was prepared to fight, and was in a hurry to begin. Ten days before Parliament met, the first instalment of the American news had already reached him. "I am not sorry," he wrote, "that the line of conduct seems now chalked out, which the enclosed despatches thoroughly justify. The New England Governments are in a state of rebellion. Blows must decide whether they are to be subject to this country or independent." He made no attempt to conceal his satisfaction when he learned that the quarrel could not be patched up. Yet he did not, like Napoleon, love war for its own sake; nor, like Louis the Fourteenth, was he unscrupulously eager to make his country great and his own name great with it. Almost as soon as he mounted the throne he had given a convincing proof of his indifference to personal glory and national aggrandisement. At a time of life when the desire of fame is a sign of virtue, or at worst a venial fault, during the height of the most triumphant war in which Britain has been engaged, he had thrust from power the ablest war-minister whose deeds have been recorded in her history. He deserted the greatest ally we ever possessed, at the exact moment of his greatest need. To the end of his days Frederic of Prussia did not forget the pang of that appalling and unexpected blow; and we were soon to learn that, when he remembered an injury, he was not of a nature to forgive it. The warlike promptings which actuated George the Third were neither ambitious nor patriotic, but political. He looked on the Americans not as foreign enemies arrayed against England, but as English-

men who wanted more liberty than he thought was good for them; and he sent his fleets and his armies against them just as he would have ordered his Footguards to support the constables in clearing the street of a mob of Wilkites.

One one point, and one point alone, the King was in agreement with the great statesman out of whose control, as the first act of his reign, he had taken the destinies of the country. Chatham, like George the Third, regarded the colonists as compatriots. In his sight they were Englishmen, who did not choose to be taxed without being represented; Whigs, who had not abandoned the principles of the Great Revolution; fellow-citizens who could not be subjugated without prospective, and even imminent, danger to the liberties of both our own islands. For Ireland had as much at stake as Great Britain, and Irishmen of all creeds and classes were alive and awake to the consequences which would ensue at home if the cause of America was overborne and ruined. In such a contest, (so Chatham insisted,) every man had a right, or rather every man was under an obligation, to choose his side in accordance with the political faith which was in him. This was not a struggle against an external foe, but a dispute within our own family. "I trust," he wrote on the Christmas eve of 1774, "that it will be found impossible for freemen in England to wish to see three millions of Englishmen slaves in America." A month afterwards he had read the parliamentary papers, with the insight of one who had received and answered a thousand despatches from the same regions. "What a correspondence!" he exclaimed. "What a dialogue between Secretary of State and General in such a crisis! Could these bundles reach the shades below, the remarks of Ximenes and of Cortez upon them would be amusing." He need not have brought Ximenes in. When Chatham closed the volume, a yet stronger ruler, and one who knew even better how to write to colonies and how to fight for them, had made himself master of the miserable narrative.

Already, before he knew the particulars, the heart of Chatham was too hot for silence. As the doom against America, (to use his own phraseology,) might at any hour be pronounced from the Treasury Bench, no time was to be lost in offering his poor thoughts to the public, for preventing a civil war before it was inevitably fixed. On the first day that the Lords met after Christmas he moved to address his Majesty to withdraw the troops from Boston, in order to open the way towards a happy settlement of the dangerous troubles in America. It was not a tactical success. Chatham had told Rockingham beforehand

that he intended to pronounce himself against insisting on that theoretical right to tax America which Rockingham's own government had asserted in the Declaratory Act of 1766. Some of the Whigs were unwilling to throw over a Statute which in its day had formed part of a great compromise. Others were prepared to consider the question of repealing the Act, whenever that proper time arrived which in politics is always so very long upon its journey. The more prudent of them exerted themselves to suppress any public manifestation of the annoyance which their party felt. "My Lord," wrote the Duke of Manchester to his leader, "you must pardon my freedom. In the present situation of affairs nothing can be so advantageous to Administration, nothing so ruinous to opposition, nothing so fatal to American liberty, as a break with Lord Chatham and his friends. I do not mean to over-rate his abilities, or to despair of our cause, though he no longer existed; but, while the man treads this earth, his name, his successes, his eloquence, the cry of the many, must exalt him into a consequence perhaps far above his station." But the resentment of the Rockinghams was all the more bitter because they had to keep it among themselves. In their communications with each other they charged Chatham with the two unpardonable crimes of forcing their hand, and taking the wind out of their sails; and in the House they supported him reluctantly, and in small numbers.

But that was all of little moment compared with the fact that a famous and faithful servant of England had made known to all and sundry his view of the conduct which, at that complicated crisis, loyalty to England demanded. William Pitt, then in his sixteenth year, had helped his father to prepare for the debate; a process which, according to the experience of others who enjoyed the same privilege, consisted in hearing a grand speech delivered from an arm-chair, entirely different in arrangement, in wording, and in everything except the doctrine which it enforced, from the series of grand speeches which next day were declaimed in public when the orator had his audience around him. "The matter and manner," (so the lad wrote to his mother on the morning after the discussion,) "were striking; far beyond what I can express. It was everything that was superior; and, though it had not the desired effect on an obdurate House of Lords, it must have had an infinite effect without doors, the bar being crowded with Americans. Lord Suffolk, I cannot say answered him, but spoke after him. My father has slept well, but is lame in one ankle from standing so long. No wonder he is lame. His first speech lasted over an hour,

and the second half an hour; surely the two finest speeches that ever were made before, unless by himself." The most notable passage was that in which Chatham declared that the cause of America was the cause of all Irishmen, Catholic and Protestant alike, and of all true Whigs in England; and in his mouth the name of Whig included every man who was not a friend to arbitrary power. The colonists were our countrymen and, if we persisted in treating them as aliens and foes, the perils which awaited us were incalculable. Foreign war, (so he told the House of Lords,) was at our door. France and Spain were watching our conduct, and waiting for the maturity of our errors. The argument was one not to be employed lightly; but if ever a statesman was justified in referring to our neighbors across the British Channel as our natural enemies it was at a period when we had been at war with France for thirty years out of the last eighty-five, and were still to be at war with her for twenty-five years out of the next forty. And if ever there was a man who might, without a sense of abasement, refer to danger from abroad as an additional reason for dealing justly with our own people, it was the minister who had fought France until he had landed her in such a plight that no one, unless our government was imprudent to madness, could foresee the time when she would be in a position to fight us again.

Any one who objected to Chatham's attitude on the American question was at liberty to term him a poor patriot and a bad citizen; and whatever reproach attached itself to his fame must be shared by those who thought with him. Charles Fox was not easily abashed, even when he was in worse company than Chatham's; and at no time of his life did he care what names he was called as long as the course of action which earned them was such that he could defend in the face of day. He did not shrink from defining, as explicitly and clearly as he stated everything, the governing motive by which his conduct during those trying years was determined. "I hope that it will be a point of honour among us all to support the American pretensions in adversity as much as we did in their prosperity, and that we shall never desert those who have acted *unsuccessfully* from Whig principles, while we continue to profess our admiration of those who succeeded in the same principles in 1688." That was how he wrote to his familiars in October, 1776, when the colonists were on the edge of destruction, and when the liberties of England seemed worth but a very few years' purchase in the view of some who were neither fools nor cowards. Among them was Horace Walpole, who pronounced himself unable



to conceive how a friend of British freedom could view with equanimity the subjection of America. He little thought, Walpole said, that he should have lived to see any single Englishman exulting over the defeat of our countrymen, when they were fighting for our liberty as well as for their own. Lord Chatham was not such an Englishman, nor Charles Fox either. They both of them looked upon the conflict as a civil war, in which no man was justified in ranking himself against those whom in his conscience he believed to be in the right.

But when France stepped in, and our country was in danger, Fox took his place amongst the foremost,—nay, it may be said, as the foremost,—of Britain's defenders; for no public man, out of office, has ever before or since played so energetic and effective a part in the management of a great war. "Attack France," he cried, "for she is your object. The war against America is against your own countrymen; that against France is against your inveterate enemy and rival." In a series of speeches, replete with military instinct, he argued in favour of assuming the offensive against the fresh assailants who came crowding in upon a nation which already had been fighting until it had grown weary and disheartened. Aggressive action, (so he never ceased repeating,) was alike dictated by the necessities of the situation, and by the character, the spirit, and the traditions of our people. He urged the ministry, with marvellous force, knowledge, and pertinacity, to rescue the navy from the decay into which they had allowed it to sink. When the French and Spanish fleets rode the Channel, with a superiority in ships of the line of two to one, his anxiety carried him and kept him as close to the scene of action as the most enterprising of landmen could penetrate. He haunted the country houses and garrison towns of the south-western coast, and lived much on shipboard, where, as any one who knows sailors could well believe, he was a general favourite. He shared the bitter mortification which his gallant friend the future Lord St. Vincent felt when kept in harbour at such a moment; and he went so far as to entertain a hope of finding himself, a cheery and popular stowaway, in the thick of what promised to be the most desperate battle which, on her own element, England would ever have fought. He sympathised warmly with those of his comrades and kinsmen who, having refused to serve against America, were rejoiced at the prospect of active employment when France entered the field; just as a royalist, who would have cut off his right hand rather than fire a pistol for the Parliament at Dunbar or Worcester, might have been proud to do his share among Cromwell's soldiers when they

were driving the Spanish pikemen across the sandhills at Dunkirk. With a steady grasp, and unerring clearness of vision, Fox steered his course through intricate and tempestuous waters; and succeeded in reconciling, under difficulties as abstruse as ever beset a statesman, his fidelity to a political creed with the duty which he owed to his country.

By this time many people were looking about to see where firmness and vigour could be found; for the news from America had begun to arouse the classes which worked the hardest, and paid the most, to a perception of the dangers towards which the country was being hurried. "The landed interest," so Camden told Chatham before the middle of February, "is almost altogether anti-American, though the common people hold the was in abhorrence, and the merchants and tradesmen for obvious reasons are likewise against it." Burke complained to Mr. Champion, the constituent whom he honoured with his confidence, that if men with business interests had interfered decisively when in the previous winter the American question became acute, conciliatory measures would most certainly have been adopted. Now, he said, they were beginning to stir because they began to feel. It so happens that the exact date is known when the true state of matters was first borne in upon the public mind. A letter from London to a gentleman in New York, dated the sixth of December, 1774, runs as follows: "This day there was a report current that the Congress of the States of America had adjourned, having fixed on stopping all imports into America from Great Britain the first of this month. From curiosity I strolled upon 'Change, and for the first time saw concern and deep distress in the face of every American merchant. This convinced me of the truth of what I may have said before, that the merchants will never stir till they feel; and everyone knows that the manufacturers will never take the lead of the merchants."<sup>1</sup>

The public despatches were alarming enough to those who reflected that Governors and Lieutenant-Governors would naturally have put the best face possible on a situation which they themselves had done

<sup>1</sup> The style of the letter to New York, with the curious similarity in certain expressions to those employed in the letter to Champion, renders it more than possible that it was written by Burke, who three years before had been appointed agent to the Assembly of New York with a salary of 500*l.* a year. It is true that he despatched a long and very famous epistle from his home in Buckinghamshire on the fifth of December; but he was speaking in the House of Commons that evening, and again on the sixth, and might well have gone on 'Change on the morning of the second day before writing the letter to the gentleman in New York.

much to create. But those despatches did not tell the worst. Men could still write freely to each other across the Atlantic; and the advices received by city merchants and bankers were of a complexion to fill everybody, except speculators for a fall, with a feeling nothing short of blank dismay. No official papers from Maryland had been printed, and it might have been supposed that no news was good news as far as that colony was concerned; but before December ended it came to be known that a principal seaport of Maryland had placed itself in line with Boston. When the brig *Peggy Stewart* of London, having on board two thousand pounds "of that detestable weed tea," arrived at Annapolis, Messrs. William and Stewart, to whom the cargo was consigned, put their hands to a paper acknowledging that they had committed an act of most pernicious tendency to the liberties of America. The same gentlemen then went on board the said vessel, with her sails set and colours flying, and voluntarily set fire to the tea. In a few hours the whole freight, and the ship with it, had been consumed by the flames in the presence of a great multitude of spectators. When the letter notifying this transaction to the London correspondents of the unfortunate firm was passing up and down Threadneedle Street, many a warm city man must have felt a shiver go through him. In the same month a Whig nobleman received an account of the warlike preparations in America, written at Philadelphia by General Lee, whose reputation in fashionable military circles lent weight to language which, like himself, was less soldierly than soldatesque. "What devil of a nonsense can instigate any man of General Gage's understanding to concur in bringing about this delusion? I have lately, my Lord, run through almost the whole colonies from the North to the South. I should not be guilty of an exaggeration in asserting that there are 200,000 strong-bodied active yeomanry, ready to encounter all hazards. They are not like the yeomanry of other countries, unarmed and unused to arms. They want nothing but some arrangement, and this they are now bent on establishing. Even this Quaker province is following the example. I was present at a review at Providence in Rhode Island, and really never saw anything more perfect. Unless the banditti at Westminster speedily undo everything they have done, their royal paymaster will hear of reviews and manœuvres not quite so entertaining as those he is presented with in Hyde Park and Wimbledon Common."

The time was too surely approaching when communications addressed from America to gentlemen and noblemen in London would

never get further than the secret room in the Post Office; and colonists who wished for peace hastened, while the avenues were open, to enlighten and admonish those English public men whom they could hope to influence. At the end of 1774 a member of the British Parliament was informed in two letters from Pennsylvania that there were gunsmiths enough in the Province to make one hundred thousand stand of arms in one year, at twenty-eight shillings sterling apiece; that the four New England colonies, together with Virginia and Maryland, were completely armed and disciplined; and that nothing but a total repeal of the Penal Acts could prevent a civil war in America. The writer dealt as freely with large figures as General Lee; but he understood his countrymen better in a case where the merits of that officer were concerned. For the letters went on to explain that the colonies were not so wrapped up in the General's military accomplishments as to give him, when it came to choosing the Commander-in-Chief, a preference over Colonel Putnam and Colonel Washington, who had won the trust and admiration of the continent by their talents and achievements. "There are several hundred thousand Americans who would face any danger with these illustrious heroes to lead them. It is to no purpose to attempt to destroy the opposition to the omnipotence of Parliament by taking off our Hancocks, Adamses, and Dickinsons. Ten thousand patriots of the same stamp stand ready to fill up their places." Dickinson himself, writing not to England, but about England, summed up the view of the best and wisest men on his side of the controversy. "I cannot but pity," he said, "a brave and generous nation thus plunged in misfortune by a few worthless persons. Everything may be attributed to the misrepresentations and mistakes of Ministers, and universal peace be established throughout the British world only by the acknowledgment of the truth that half a dozen men are fools or knaves. If their character for ability and integrity is to be maintained by wrecking the whole empire, Monsieur Voltaire may write an addition to the chapter on the subject of 'Little things producing great events.'"<sup>2</sup>

From this time forwards there was a growing disposition in the House of Commons to take America seriously; and there was a man in it determined never again to let the question sleep. On the second of February, 1775, the Prime Minister moved an Address to the King, praying his Majesty to adopt effectual measures for suppressing rebel-

<sup>2</sup> The extracts given in this and the preceding paragraphs are all from the American Archives.



lion in the colonies. Later in the evening a member rose who, in the style of solemn circumlocution by which the chroniclers of proceedings in Parliament appeared to think that they kept themselves right with the law, was described as "a gentleman who had not long before sat at the Treasury Board, from whence he had been removed for a spirit not sufficiently submissive, and whose abilities were as unquestioned as the spirit for which he suffered."<sup>3</sup> Fox, (for Fox of course it was), proposed an amendment deploring that the papers laid upon the table had served only to convince the House that the measures taken by his Majesty's servants tended rather to widen than to heal the unhappy differences between Great Britain and America. That was the turning point of his own career, and the starting point for others in a hearty, fearless, and sustained opposition to the policy of the Government. The effect of his oratory is established by various competent authorities, from the official reporter who broke off to remark that Mr. Charles Fox spoke better than usual,<sup>4</sup> to Walpole, who records in his journals that the young statesman entered into the whole history and argument of the dispute with force and temper, and made the finest figure he had done yet.

But the most lively and convincing testimony is found in a letter written by a great man who on this occasion learned, finally and resignedly, how hard it is even to begin making a great speech. Gibbon had been getting ready for the debate during the whole of the Christmas holidays: studying the parliamentary papers as minutely as if they had been the lost books of Dion Cassius; talking for four hours on end with one of the agents from Massachusetts; and "sucking Governor Hutchinson very dry," with as much probability of arriving at a just conclusion as a Roman Senator who took his idea of the Sicilian character from a private conversation with Verres. But, when the hour came, he felt that he himself was not the man for it. Throughout the Amendment on the Address, and the report of the Address, he sate safe but inglorious, listening to the thunder which rolled around him. The principal antagonists on both days, he said, were Fox and Wedderburn; of whom the elder displayed his usual talents, while the younger, embracing the whole vast compass of the question before the House, discovered powers for regular debate which neither his friends hoped, nor his enemies dreaded. On the first day, when Fox discoursed for an hour and twenty minutes, his contribution to the discussion is repre-

<sup>3</sup> *The Annual Register* for 1775, chapter v.

<sup>4</sup> *The Parliamentary History of England*, vol. xvii., p. 227.

sented in the Parliamentary History by an abstract of five lines, and on the second day his name is not even mentioned; while Wilkes obtained six columns, and Governor Johnston nine. It is evident, and indeed was sometimes as good as confessed in a foot-note, that in those early and artless days of reporting a speaker got back in print what he gave in manuscript. Fox would as soon have thought of writing down what he was going to say as of meeting a bill before it fell due; and the rapid growth of his fame may be estimated by a comparison between the reports of 1775 and those of 1779 and 1780. Before the Parliament was dissolved, his more important speeches were reproduced without the omission of a topic and, so far as the existing resources of stenography admitted, without the abbreviation of a sentence.

Fox took the sense of the House on his Amendment, and had reason to be satisfied with the result. He had been long enough a member of Parliament to have learned that, in politics, all's well that ends pretty well. The minority mustered over a hundred; a number exceeding by forty the best division which, in the former Parliament, was obtained against the worst of the American measures. It would have been reckoned a most weighty protest on any occasion when any House of Commons has been invited to take steps which responsible Ministers affirm to be necessary for vindicating the honour and securing the predominance of the country. But it was doubly significant in that age of intimidation and bribery. All who voted on the one side were perfectly well aware that in so doing they cut themselves off from the hope of their sovereign's favour, or even of his forgiveness. And meanwhile a full half of those who voted on the other side were drawing public salary without rendering any public service except that of doing as they were bid; or were fingering money which had passed into their pockets from the Exchequer by methods that in our day would have been ruinous both to him who received and him who bestowed. The King pronounced the majority "very respectable," as to him, in both senses of the word, it no doubt seemed. So pleased was he that he kindly condoled with his Minister on having been kept out of bed, (which in the case of Lord North was a very different thing from being kept awake,) till so late an hour as three o'clock in the morning.

That Minister, however, was less easily satisfied. He now knew himself to be face to face with a very different opposition from anything which in the existing Parliament he had hitherto encountered. He recognised the quarter from which vitality had been infused into the counsels and procedures of his adversaries. Before a fortnight had

elapsed he came down to the House with a Resolution promising in the name of the Commons that any American colony, in which the Assembly consented to vote money for certain stated public purposes, should be exempted from the liability to be taxed by the British Parliament. Every man, in that Parliament and outside it, saw that the plan was specially and carefully framed to meet the argument on which, in his recent speeches, Charles Fox had founded the case that he had so brilliantly advocated. Governor Pownall, who immediately followed North, stated in well-chosen words which no one ventured to contradict that the Resolution was a peace offering to the young ex-minister.<sup>5</sup> Such a recognition would have been a high compliment from any man in office to any private member; but when paid by a First Lord of the Treasury to a former subordinate, who had left his Board within the twelvemonth, and had been attacking him ever since, it was a piece of practical adulation which put to a searching and unexpected proof both the strength of conviction and the presence of mind of him to whom it was addressed.

On neither of the two points was Fox unequal to the test. While Pownall was speaking he had time to decide on his line of action, the importance of which he at once discerned. It was his first chance of showing that he possessed the qualities of a true parliamentary leader, who could make the most of a tactical situation without surrendering in the smallest particular his loyalty to a great cause. He commenced his remarks by congratulating the public on the change in the Prime Minister's attitude. The noble Lord, who had been all for violence and war, was treading back in his own footprints towards peace. Now was seen the effect which a firm and spirited opposition never failed to produce. The noble Lord had lent his ear to reason; and, if the minority in that House persevered in supporting the rights and liberties of the colonies, the process of his conversion would go on apace. He had spoken of the Americans with propriety and discrimination. He had refused to allow that they were rebels; and even to Massachusetts he would gladly open a door through which she might return to her

<sup>5</sup> "An honourable gentleman, in a late debate, certainly was the first and the only one to hit upon the real jet of the dispute between his country and America. He very ably stated that the reason why the colonies objected to the levying taxes for the purpose of a revenue in America was that such revenue took out of the hands of the people that control which every Englishman thinks he ought to have over that government to which his rights and interests are entrusted. The mode of appropriation specified in this resolution takes away the ground of that opposition."—*The Parliamentary History of England*, Feb. 20, 1775.

allegiance. He had distinctly stated that Great Britain, dealing as one nation according to diplomatic usage deals with another, had at the outset demanded more than in the end she would insist on exacting; and, once that principle admitted, the noble Lord would be as much inclined on a future day to recede from what he proposed now, as now he was ready to give up that which he had before so strenuously defended. But for the present the noble Lord had not gone far enough. He aimed at standing well with two sets of people whose views were irreconcilable:—the colonists who were resolved, under no conditions, to admit the right of Parliament to tax them; and the supporters of the Government who were equally determined, in every contingency, to assert that right and to exercise it. The noble Lord had wished to content both parties, and he had contented neither. On the countenances of gentlemen opposite the orator, so far as he was able to read them, could descry no symptoms of satisfaction; and the Americans, it was only too certain, must and would reject the offer with disdain.

The speech was marked by the highest art,—that of saying precisely what the speaker thought, in the plainest language, and without a syllable over. A scene ensued when he resumed his place which was long remembered within the House of Commons, and has occupied a space in English and American histories out of all proportion to its intrinsic consequence, except so far as it discredited the Prime Minister, and established the position and authority of Fox. It was one of those rare moments when a great party, in a tumult of indignant surprise, shakes off the control of those to whom it is accustomed to look for guidance; when the Ministers sit on thorns, or jump up, each in his turn only to confound confusion, and attract on to his own head a share of the impertinences with which the air is swarming; and when an opposition feels itself repaid in the wild joy of a single hour for long years of disappointment and abstinence. North, like much greater men before and after him, experienced the inconvenience of having sprung a policy on his followers and on not a few of his colleagues. The mutiny began at headquarters. Welbore Ellis, a placeman who had already turned his hundredth quarter-day, querulously announced that as a man of honour he felt bound to oppose the Minister; and though North could hardly be called a sick lion, the House hailed with glee an occurrence which bore a strong resemblance to a very familiar fable. Rigby was seen taking notes, and could with difficulty be persuaded to put them back into his pocket; but he did not fail to make his views known to that part of the audience which was the least likely to be gratified by



them. An aside from him was more formidable than an oration from Welbore Ellis; and every Right Honourable Gentleman within earshot on the Treasury bench was obliged to hear how, in Rigby's opinion, the proper persons to move and second Lord North's Resolution were Mr. Otis and Mr. Hancock, of whom the one had been the ringleader in the agitation against the Stamp Act, and the other had superintended the destruction of the tea. The most violent in the fray was Captain Acland, a cousin by marriage of Charles Fox. He was a young man of fierce manners and dauntless courage, who now was always to the front when sharp words were being exchanged; especially where there was a prospect that on the next morning recourse would be had to yet more pointed weapons. Acland assailed the Government in a style which aroused the wonder even of Chatham; whose standard of the lengths to which a young military man might go when denouncing his elders in the House of Commons had, in the days when he himself was a cornet of horse, been notoriously a generous one.<sup>6</sup>

The real danger to the Ministry lay in the sulkiness of the King's Friends. These gentlemen, by an unaccountable blunder, had been left without their orders. Having to decide for themselves as to what their employer expected of them, they naturally enough concluded that, as in the parallel case of Rockingham and the repeal of the Stamp Act, their duty to the King required them to stab his Minister in the back. North had been up five or six times, and matters were looking very black for the Government, when, before it was too late, a deft and able ally came to the rescue. Sir Gilbert Elliot was a politician of account in his own generation, and had ere this been honoured by a message from the King to the effect that he did not take so forward a part in the House of Commons as his abilities warranted. But he needed no one to tell him how to make the most of his remarkable qualities; and he reserved himself for emergencies when a King's Friend who could speak as well as vote was of more value than dozens or scores of silent courtiers.

Gilbert Elliot's political fortunes had gained much, but his post-humous celebrity has suffered not a little, from the unique distinction of his family; for he was the midmost of five eminent men, with the same Christian name and surname, who succeeded each other as father

<sup>6</sup> "Lord North was, in the beginning of the day, like a man *exploded*, and the judgment of the House, during about two hours, was that his Lordship was going to be in a considerable minority; Mr. Ellis and others, young Acland in particular, having declared highly and roughly against his desertion of the cause of cruelty."—Chatham to his wife, Feb. 21, 1775.

and son. The world, glad to have anything by which to identify him, has remembered him as the writer of a pastoral song admired by Sir Walter Scott. It began with the line, perhaps better known than the rest of the poem,

My sheep I neglected, I broke my sheep-hook.

The author of the ditty now proved that he was skilled in the use of that rustic implement. Elliot bluntly warned the official flock that it was high time to leave off butting at each other, and scampering at large over the country. He contrived to convey something into his manner which suggested to the King's Friends that they were on the wrong scent; as indeed was the case, since the whole business had been arranged beforehand between the Sovereign and the Minister. The storm abated; and Fox, who saw that there had been sufficient of it for his purposes, moved that the Chairman should leave the Chair. A division took place, and there was some cross-voting; for on both sides there were as usual certain of those ingenious senators who please themselves with thinking that they indicate their opinion on the main issue by the course they take on a technical point which is understood by no one outside Parliament, and by fewer within it than is generally believed. And so the business ended, with a twofold result. Fox, in his character of a champion of liberty, had shown himself not less prompt a warrior, and a much more judicious strategist, than in the days when he figured as Lord of Misrule in all the sham tournaments of the House of Commons. And North had been effectually frightened, for some long time to come, out of any inclination to try his hand at the conciliation of America.

The Prime Minister had no desire for a repetition of the lesson which that twentieth of February had taught him. He saw very plainly what his place would have been worth at noon on the twenty-first if the King's Friends had been correct in thinking that they had the King behind them. So long as North held his present employment there was no demand for the services of his better self; and he returned once more to plod the weary round of coercive legislation. The main occupation of Parliament during that session was a bill for excluding the New England colonies from the principal fishing grounds within their reach, and notably from the banks of Newfoundland. It was from the cod fishery that the prosperity of those colonies had originally sprung, and by the same industry it was still largely maintained. A sea captain in the early

years of the seventeenth century calculated that the charge of equipping a ship of a hundred tons, with eight boats of the sort now called dories on board, was four hundred pounds. "Eight boats with 22 men in a Summer doe usually kill 25,000 fish for every Boat. Sometimes they have taken above 35,000 for a Boat, so that they load not onely their owne Ship, but other spare ships which come thither onely to buy the overplus." This captain went on to explain that the cargo, if taken in the right season to the right market, (which was not "Touloune or Merselus," but England,) would sell for 2,250*l*. "At New Plimoth, in Aprill," the writer proceeded, "there is a fish much like a herring that comes up into the small brookes to spawne. After those the Cod also presseseth in such plenty, even into the very harbours, that they have caught some in their arms, and hooke them so fast that three men oft loadeth a Boat of two tuns in two houres."<sup>7</sup>

James the First had conferred upon the settlers in New England the exclusive privilege of fishing in North American waters. That concession was justly resented by the English Parliament; but the colonists forbore from enforcing their uttermost rights, and indeed had no occasion for them. They lived and thrived by fishing not because they were monopolists, but because they were on the spot; because the best boat-builders in the world, and very far from the worst ship-builders, had their yards at Boston; and because above all they belonged to the right race for the work. And now, when it was proposed for political objects to drive them from the pursuit of their calling, the uneasiness which had begun to pervade the commercial world deepened into consternation. It was vain for the Ministry to hold forth the bait of the spoils of New England, and to evoke patriotic cupidity by the prospect of the three hundred thousand pounds, or the five hundred thousand pounds, which would be transferred yearly from the ship-owners of Salem and Providence to the ship-owners of Poole and Dartmouth. The trained leaders of commerce, who knew the open secrets of solid and profitable business, did not look for information from hack-writers whose statistics and arguments were dictated to them in Downing Street. The whole life of every English merchant and banker, and of his father and grandfather before him, had been one continuous course of instruction in the present and progressing value of the trade with America. The exports to Pennsylvania alone had increased fifty-fold in less than three-

<sup>7</sup> The account may be found in "*The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles*, by Captaine John Smith, London, 1624"; under the head of "Master Dee, his opinion for the building of Ships."

quarters of a century. New England was a large and regular customer, with an enormous current debt owing to British exporters and manufacturers. That custom would be a thing of the past, and those debts could never be recovered, if with the loss of her fishing she lost the means of providing herself with imported goods, and paying for those which she had received already. Nor was it only a question of New England. The colonies, one and all, were on honour to stand and fall together; and, when the cruel and insulting measure now before Parliament was once in the Statute-book, all hope that Congress would drop the non-importation agreement would have to be definitely abandoned.

This time there was little hesitation in the action of the mercantile classes throughout the English-speaking world; and there could be no mistake as to their views, which found a voice in petitions, in depositions, and in evidence proffered at the bar of the Lords. The planters of the Sugar Islands resident in London entreated the House of Commons to stay its hand. As time went on and the news of what was purposed reached the tropics, the Assembly of Jamaica, in the hurry of a well-grounded panic, drew up and despatched a petition explaining how in their case, with a vast slave population around and among them, the very existence of society would be endangered by the cessation of their traffic with the American colonies. The Society of Friends represented to Parliament the case of Nantucket, an island which lay off the coast of Massachusetts. The population subsisted on the whale fishery, and owned a fleet of one hundred and forty sail. The agricultural produce of Nantucket would hardly support twenty families; but the island contained more than five thousand inhabitants. Nine out of ten among them were Quakers, of whom none were disaffected politicians, and all drank tea to a man. That was a sample of the extent to which the bill would involve opponents, well-wishers, and neutrals in one common destruction. The sentiments of the higher commerce, in its central haunt, found expression in an address laid by the Lord Mayor, the Aldermen, and the Liverymen at the foot of the Throne. The occupant of that august seat received their remonstrance in public with marked coldness, and characterised it in private as a new dish of insolence from the shop which had fabricated so many. It was a shop the proprietors of which could not fairly be charged with interfering in matters outside their own province; for the debts due from New England amounted to eight hundred thousand pounds in the City of London alone.

The bill for restraining the trade and commerce of the New England colonies afforded Parliament one more opening to arrange by policy



those difficulties which were rapidly tending towards a solution by the arbitrament of war. That last opportunity was soon a lost one; but the spokesmen of the minority comported themselves in a manner worthy of the supreme occasion, and of the great assembly to which they belonged. It was a question precisely suited to the genius of Burke. The final series of appeals in which he exhorted the House of Commons to settle the American controversy by light and right, before it came to a contest of might, showed more than his usual power of mastering the details of trade and finance, and converting them into oratory for the instruction of his audience, and into literature for the admiration of posterity. As member for Bristol he was bound to do his utmost in the interests of commerce; and his constituents, the best of whom were not undeserving of such a representative, had supplied him with fresh stores of facts and calculations in addition to those which he possessed already. His speaking had never been more rich in the fruit, and more sparing in the flowers; and he had his reward in the close and respectful attention of hearers uneasily conscious that the fate of the empire was slipping out of their grasp, and that an impulse had been given to it which might carry it far in the wrong direction.

Burke's exertions were supported and supplemented by Fox with an abundance, but no superfluity, of that straightforward and unlaboured declamation which, from his earliest to his latest speech, always commanded the ear, and never offended the taste, of the House of Commons. With headlong but sure-handed energy of delineation he sketched out the broad lines of statesmanship, and filled them in with the special circumstances of the situation. His warning against the folly of presenting all Americans, whatever might be their political sympathies, with the alternative of starvation or rebellion, impressed his listeners by its force and directness, and received striking confirmation at the critical moments of the war. On three several occasions the fate of a campaign was largely influenced by those very fishermen who had been driven wholesale from their employment into the ranks of Washington's army. The enthusiasm, the intrepidity, and the professional skill of the mariners who served in the New England regiments enabled their general to deprive the British garrison of the supplies which abounded on the islands in Boston harbour; to accomplish the retirement from the lines of Brooklyn which averted what otherwise must have been a crowning disaster; and to effect that crossing of the Delaware on a mid-winter midnight which secured for him the most sorely

wanted of all his successes. The loyalist poets amused themselves by describing how

Priests, tailors, and cobblers fill with heroes the camp,  
And sailors, like craw-fish, crawl out of each swamp.

But, as a matter of history, those sailors had walked ashore in a very dangerous temper from the fishing vessels which, in consequence of the action of Parliament, were lying useless alongside the quays of every town and village on the seaboard of New England.<sup>8</sup>

Fox's argument, roughly and insufficiently reported, has not come down to us in the shape for insertion in a handbook of oratorical extracts. But it has the stamp of a speech hot from the heart, spoken by a man who thought only of convincing or confuting those who heard him, without caring how his words would read on the next morning or in another century. "You have now," said Fox, "completed the system of your folly. You had some friends yet left in New England. You yourselves made a parade of the number you had there. But you have not treated them like friends. How must they feel, what must they think, when the people against whom they have stood out in support of your measures say to them: 'You see now what friends in England you have depended upon. They separated you from your real friends, while they hoped to ruin us by it; but since they cannot destroy us without mixing you in the common carnage, your merits to them will not now save you. You are to be starved indiscriminately with us. You are treated in common with us as rebels, whether you rebel or not. Your loyalty has ruined you. Rebellion alone, if resistance is rebellion, can save you from famine and ruin.' When these things are said to them, what can they answer?"

The opposite view to that held by Fox and Burke did not suffer for want of being boldly stated. A recent addition to the notabilities of Parliament had been made in the person of Henry Dundas, now Lord Advocate for Scotland, who very soon gave indication of those qualities which were to win for him his considerable future and his unenviable fame. He entered on his career in the House of Commons with the advantage of having early in life played leading parts on a narrower stage. He had been Solicitor-General in the Court of Session of Edinburgh at four and twenty; and had learned to debate, if he had learned nothing else there for his profit, in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Tall and manly,—with a marked national accent of which,

<sup>8</sup> The verse is quoted in Tyler's *Literary History*.

unlike Wedderburn, he had the good sense not to be ashamed,—his look and bearing betokened indefatigable powers and a dominant nature. His face showed evident marks of his having been a hearty fellow, for which a convivial generation liked him none the less; especially when they came to find that his speeches had other things about them which were broad besides their Scotch.<sup>9</sup> Those who followed him closely might hope to carry away what passed for a good story after dinner, in circles which were not fastidious. Dundas now took upon himself to defend the ministerial proposal against the strictures of Charles Fox. The measure, he said, was not sanguinary; and as for the famine which was so pathetically lamented, his only fear was that the Act would fail to produce it. Though prevented from fishing in the sea, the New Englanders had fish in their rivers; and though their country was not fit to grow wheat, they had a grain of their own, their Indian corn, on which they could subsist full as well as they deserved.

Such was the man who, when he was twenty years older, and neither more nor less unfeeling, had at his absolute disposal the liberties of Scotland, and the lives and fortunes of all who loved those liberties too ardently for their own safety. On the present occasion Dundas had gone further in his self-revelation than was pleasing to a House of Commons not yet accustomed to him and his ways. Lord John Cavendish, speaking amidst general sympathy, gravely rebuked the Minister who had uttered sentiments which would have been shocking even in the mouth of a parliamentary buffoon; and Burke followed up the attack in plain vernacular suited to the character of the offence which he was chastising. Nothing, he said, could be more foolish, more cruel, and more insulting than to hold out as a resource to the starving fishermen, ship-builders, and ship-carpenters who would be ruined by the Act that, after the plenty of the Ocean, they might poke in the brooks and rake in the puddles, and diet on what Englishmen considered as husks and draff for hogs. The friends of the Government who had been too apt, as Horace Walpole said, to treat the Americans in the spirit of a mob ducking a pickpocket, were ashamed at seeing their own worst features distorted in that brazen mirror. The Lord Advocate in vain attempted to extenuate, to explain, and, if possible, to excuse his con-

<sup>9</sup> Omond's *Lord Advocates of Scotland*, chapter xiv. Boswell, who had his personal jealousies, and his own political ambitions outside the Scotch Bar, was greatly exercised when Dundas began to play a part in London. He called the new Minister "a coarse dog." The specimen of Dundas's humour referred to by Mr. Omond, and reported in the 20th volume of the *Parliamentary History*, is not so much coarse as revolting.

duct. Even the majority had had enough of him; and the only acceptable sentence of his second speech was that in which he announced that he should bow to the disposition of the House, and say no more.

It was time that an example should be made. Sandwich and Rigby were the two Ministers whose words went for most, because it was notorious that they ruled the Government. As if by concert between themselves, they now adopted a tone of forced and studied insolence with reference to the colonists. One would think, Rigby said in the House of Commons, that the Americans were otters and ate nothing but fish. As to the notion, of which so much had been heard, that they might find courage in despair, it was an idea thrown out to frighten women and children. They had not amongst them the military prowess of a militia drummer. The Earl of Sandwich descanted on the same theme in the House of Lords. What did it signify, he asked, if the colonies abounded in men, so long as they were raw, undisciplined, and cowardly? For his own part he wished that they would put into the field not forty thousand, but two hundred thousand, so-called soldiers; as the greater their numbers, the easier would be the conquest. And then he proceeded to tell the peers an anecdote which he professed to have got from Sir Peter Warren. He related at considerable length, and with infinite gusto, how at the siege of Louisburg in 1745 the Americans had been placed in the front of the army; how they had shown much elation at the honour which had been conferred upon them, though they boasted that it was no more than their due; how they all ran away when the first shot was fired; how Sir Peter then posted them in the rear, and told them that it was the custom of generals to preserve their best troops to the last, especially among the ancient Romans, who were the only nation that ever resembled the Americans in courage and patriotism.

The story was a lie, on the face of it. No man with a grain of knowledge about military affairs would have believed it for a moment; and no man of honour would have repeated it without believing it, even if he were not a responsible Minister addressing Parliament. By putting it into the mouth of a British Admiral, Sandwich insulted not only the Americans, but the honest and generous service over which he unworthily presided. The speech was a poor compliment to the gratitude, or else to the information, of the peers; for it was known and acknowledged that the land force employed in those operations which resulted in the first capture of Louisburg had been levied in New England, and



had behaved to admiration.<sup>10</sup> The Lords resented the language which Sandwich had addressed to them. The Earl of Suffolk, Secretary of State though he was, took his colleague of the Admiralty roundly to task; and sixteen peers, in the Protest which they entered on the Journals, recorded their opinion that the topic so much insisted upon by a lord high in office, namely, the cowardice of his Majesty's American subjects, had no weight in itself as an argument for the bill, and was not at all agreeable to the dignity of sentiment which ought to characterise their House.

These taunts, directed against a people as high-mettled as our own, and more acutely alive to what was said and thought about them, exercised on the martial spirit of the colonists the same effect as Wedderburn's speech before the Privy Council had produced on their political sensibilities. The records of America during the next two years indicate on every page how many recruits of the choicest sort were impelled into her armies by the determination that such a reproach should not be justified. Her national literature throughout the next generation proves that the memory rankled long after the veterans who survived the war had gone back to the stack-yard and the counting-house. Unfortunately no one intervened in the debates who, with the authority of personal experience, could testify to the real value of the colonial militiamen. Those great soldiers who had served with them in the field were in retirement or in the grave. Chatham, who owed them so large a debt, was prevented by ill health from coming down to the House of Lords in order to abash their detractors. From his sick-chamber he wistfully and critically watched all that was passing, and he was not left without his consolations. The Marquis of Granby, before he came of age, had been returned as member for the University of Cambridge for the sake of the hero whose noble portrait, as he stands by his

<sup>10</sup> Parkman says in the first chapter of his *Montcalm and Wolfe*: "New England had borne the heaviest brunt of the preceding wars. Having no trained officers, and no disciplined soldiers, and being too poor to maintain either, she borrowed her warriors from the workshop and the plough, and officered them with lawyers, merchants, mechanics, and farmers. To compare them with good regular troops would be folly; but they did, on the whole, better than could have been expected, and in the last war achieved the brilliant success of the capture of Louisburg." The exploit, Parkman goes on to say, was owing partly to good luck, and partly to native hardihood.

Captain Mahan writes: "The most solid success, the capture of Cape Breton Island in 1745, was achieved by the colonial forces of New England, to which indeed the royal navy lent valuable aid, for to troops so situated the fleet is the one line of communication." Lord Stanhope, in his *History*, attributes the taking of Louisburg to the people of New England. "For their commander they chose Mr. Pepperel, a private gentleman, in whom courage and sagacity supplied the place of military skill."

charger, lights up the Great Combination Room of Trinity College with life and colour. The son was resolved that, as far as he could speak for his dead father, something should be heard even at second hand from one who had learned to be a judge of courage amid scenes very different from those with which the Bedfords were familiar. Breaking silence for the first time, he followed Rigby with a fine vindication of the colonists, and a happily expressed tribute to the Minister who had made use of their valour for the protection and enlargement of the Empire. His reward was a letter dictated by Chatham, exquisite in feeling, and containing words of praise which, coming from such a quarter, would do more than volumes of good advice to turn a young man into the right path.<sup>11</sup>

It may be observed with satisfaction that the chorus of calumny was swelled by no one with soldierly antecedents, or with the making of a soldier in him. Captain Acland, who was much too ready to inform Parliament that he cordially disliked the people of Massachusetts, always spoke of their military qualities with decency and even with respect. The time was not far distant when he learned the whole truth about the fighting value of New Englanders. After the last of a succession of hot engagements, in all of which he had shown daring and skill, he was picked up desperately wounded, well within the American lines. And, while he was still a prisoner, his services to his country were cut short in a duel with a brother officer who had sneered in his presence at the military character of those colonists whom, brave as he was, Acland knew to be no less brave than himself.

<sup>11</sup> Chatham to Granby, April 7, 1775; from a draft in Lady Chatham's handwriting.

## CHAPTER VI

### HOSTILITIES BECOME IMMINENT. LEXINGTON

RIGBY had told the House of Commons that, if the Acts against which Congress protested were repealed, the seat of the Empire would henceforward be at Philadelphia; and he recommended gentlemen ambitious of a career to transfer themselves to that capital, and enjoy the honour of consorting with Dr. Franklin. For the great American had now started on his way back across the ocean; though it was no fault of Rigby that he was not still in London, and in very uncomfortable quarters. If by the publication of Hutchinson's letters Franklin contributed to embroil the relations between England and the colonies, he had abundantly expiated his own error, and had done his best to redeem the errors of others. His existence during the last fourteen months had been one long penance, which he endured manfully and patiently because he was conscious that he, and he alone, possessed in combination the knowledge, position, character, and capacity indispensable to any one who aspired to bring the last faint chance of peace to a successful issue. On the day after the scene in the Privy Council Office he had been dismissed from his Postmastership; and of his own accord he dispensed himself from all diplomatic ceremonies, keeping aloof from levees, and abstaining from direct and ostensible intercourse with Cabinet Ministers the most powerful among whom made no secret of their opinion that the proper residence for him was the inside of Newgate. Meanwhile his wife, to whom he had been happily married forty-four years, and from whom he had been parted for ten, was dying at home in Pennsylvania; and he never saw her again. But at no time in his life was his society so eagerly courted by such eminent men, for the promotion of such momentous objects. Chatham, (whom Franklin had once found unapproachable, but who, as is the case with strong and haughty but generous natures, had grown mild and mellow with

years,) secured him as a guest in Kent, called on him at his lodgings in a street off the Strand, and took care to be seen paying him marked attention in public. In the House of Lords the old statesman, with characteristic ignorance of the non-essential, took Franklin to the space before the throne, which is reserved for Privy Councillors and the eldest sons of peers. On learning his mistake he limped back to the outer Bar, and commended his friend to the care of the door-keepers in accents which all might hear.

Lord Howe, now a Rear Admiral, who if hostilities broke out was sure of an important command, honoured himself by an endeavour to avert a war which could not fail to bring him wealth, however small might be the opportunity for acquiring glory. He commissioned his sister to challenge Franklin to a trial of skill at chess, and contrived to be within call on an evening when the invitation had been accepted.<sup>1</sup> Lord Howe, in the phrase of the day, opened himself freely to his new acquaintance on the alarming situation of affairs, and put him into communication with Lord Hyde, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster; and Lord Hyde, as was well understood all round, meant Lord Dartmouth. The Secretary for the Colonies would have given his salary, many times told, to prevent bloodshed; though in the last resort he could not induce himself to thwart, or even to contradict, a master towards whom he entertained a true attachment, and who esteemed him as he deserved. For George the Third was at his very best when exchanging ideas with Dartmouth for any other purpose than that of harrying him into harrying the Americans. "If the first of duties," (so the monarch wrote to the Minister in July, 1773,) "that to God, is not known, I fear no other can be expected; and as to the fashionable word 'honour,' that will never alone guide a man farther than to preserve appearance. I will not add more; for I know I am writing to a true believer; one who shows by his actions that he is not governed by the greatest of tyrants, Fashion." Not long afterwards his Majesty asked Dr. Beattie what he thought of Lord Dartmouth, and the author of the *Essay on Truth* responded with effusion which bordered on the fulsome. The King, who spoke and wrote a style greatly preferable to that of some among his subjects who had most pleased the literary taste of the hour, smiled and said: "Doctor Beattie, you are perfectly right. I think precisely the same of him myself. He is certainly a most excellent man."

<sup>1</sup> Franklin's *Account of Negotiations in London for effecting a Reconciliation between Great Britain and the American Colonies*.



An unofficial negotiation for settling the difficulties between Great Britain and the colonies was set on foot forthwith. The details were conducted by Franklin in concert with two of those Englishmen of the middle class who, if a chance was given them, were able and willing to employ upon the business of the nation the same diligence and sagacity with which they had long managed their own. Mr. Barclay was a well-known member of the Society of Friends, as likewise was his colleague, Dr. Fothergill; a physician with a great London practice, and a Natural Historian of remarkable distinction. Their deliberations took shape in a document called by the modest name of a "Paper of Hints for Conversation." In truth it was the draft of a treaty which, if it had been approved, signed, and ratified, would have had a merit rare among the celebrated instruments in history;—that of terminating a sharp and extended controversy rationally, equitably, permanently, and without derogation to the self-esteem of either of the contracting parties. A copy of the proposed Articles had been in Dartmouth's hands, and he expressed himself about them hopefully and favourably in private. On the first of February, 1775, Chatham presented to Parliament a bill for settling the troubles in America, and the Secretary for the Colonies begged their Lordships not to kill the measure by an immediate vote, but to let it lie on the table until it had received their careful and respectful consideration. In his sincere desire to do his duty according to the light of his own understanding, Dartmouth had for a moment forgotten the terrors of the Bedfords. Sandwich, who suspected that peace was in the crucible, knew only too well that premature publicity may be as discomfoting to those who are planning good as to those who are plotting evil. He chose his moment with a sinister address worthy of the orator who turned the debate in the Second Book of "Paradise Lost." Looking full and hard at Franklin, who was leaning over the Bar, Sandwich exclaimed that he had in his eye the person who drew up the proposals which were under discussion,—one of the bitterest and most mischievous enemies whom England had ever known. Chatham hastened to interpose the shield of his eloquence for the protection of one who might not speak for himself within those walls; but Franklin was not the quarry at whom Sandwich aimed. The shaft had gone home to the breast towards which it was really levelled. Dartmouth rose once more, and said that he could not press a course which evidently was unacceptable to their Lordships, and that he himself would give his voice for rejecting the bill forthwith.

The scheme of reconciliation, which promised so fairly, had received

its death-blow. Franklin, who was determined to leave no device untried, offered to pay the East India Company for their tea on the security of his private fortune, and (he might have added) at the risk of his popularity among his own countrymen. Mr. Barclay on the other hand, in his honest eagerness to save the irretrievable, hinted that, if the representative of America would show himself sufficiently easy to deal with, he might expect not only to be reinstated in the Postmastership which he had lost, but to get any place under Government that he cared to ask for. Franklin, more offended than he chose to show, replied that the only place the Ministry would willingly give him was a place in a cart to Tyburn, but that he would do his utmost without any other inducement than the wish to be serviceable. The proceedings of the conference trickled on for a few weeks, and then ended in a marsh; as must always be the case where the agents on either of the two sides are not their own masters, but have those behind them who intend the negotiations to fail. By the middle of March Dr. Fothergill sadly admitted that the pretence of an accommodation was specious, but altogether hollow; and that the great folks whom he was in the habit of attending as patients had all along regarded the colonies as nothing better than "a larger field on which to fatten a herd of worthless parasites." Some days afterwards Franklin sailed for Philadelphia, and beguiled a protracted voyage by drawing up an account of the doleful transactions on which he had been recently engaged, and by the more profitable and congenial occupation of testing with his thermometer the breadth and the direction of the Gulf Stream.

After a short interval he was followed across the Atlantic by emissaries the colour of whose coats showed that the day of grace was past. The affairs of America were in a tangle which the King and his Ministers had neither the will nor the wit to unravel. The knot was now for the sword to cut, and they looked around them for a man who had the skill of his weapon. Clive, and his old chief Lawrence, had died within the last few months. Granby had fought in the best British fashion at the head of a British contingent as large as a formidable army; and Wolfe had done miracles with smaller numbers. But they both had gone, leaving nothing except their example. Albemarle too was dead, who as general of the land forces in the West Indies had shared with the navy in the undoubted honour and the vast profit which accrued from the conquest of Havana. As an officer who had been tried in a supreme command there remained Sir Jeffrey Amherst. He had won his laurels in America, where he had gained the character

of a cautious and sound strategist. His name stood high among the colonists, who had formed half of the very considerable body of troops which he was careful to gather around him before he opened a campaign; whom he had treated handsomely; and to whose co-operation he gratefully attributed an ample portion of the credit of his victory.

The judgment of New Englanders on their rulers, when newspapers were few and cautious, was to be found in their sermons, which never flattered those whom the preacher and his hearers did not love. When Montreal fell in the autumn of 1760, the pulpits rang with the praises of "the intrepid, the serene, the successful Amherst." The pastor of Brookfield, who had been a chaplain in a Massachusetts regiment, (and American military chaplains generally contrived to smell whatever powder was being burned,) after hailing the downfall of the Canadian Babylon, broke out into praises of Amherst the renowned general, worthy of that most honourable of all titles, the Christian hero; who loved his enemies, and while he subdued them, made them happy. Amherst had indeed endeavoured to infuse some chivalry and humanity into the rude and often horrible warfare of the backwoods; and his severities, sharp enough on occasion, were necessitated by the hideous cruelties which the Indian allies of France inflicted upon the farming population of the English border.

Amherst had proved himself a stout warrior elsewhere than in the field. In the year 1768 he had been in collision with the King over a matter about which neither was in the right; and the General had come off with flying colours and abundance of spoil. A Court favourite had been nominated to a post which Amherst held, but the work of which he did not do. In his wrath he threw up all his functions and appointments, and aroused such a commotion in the political and military world that he had to be coaxed back at any sacrifice. He returned to the official ranks stronger, and better endowed with public money, than ever; and neither minister nor monarch ventured to disturb him again. By January 1775 George the Third had reconsidered the favourable opinion which he had formed of General Gage, and now declared him wanting in activity and decision. He proposed to confer upon Amherst the command of the troops in America, together with a commission to use his well-known influence and popularity among the colonists for the purpose of inducing them to make their peace before recourse was had to arms. Gage meanwhile, by an arrangement in which the tax-payer was the last person thought of, was to continue Governor of Massachusetts, and to draw his pay as Commander-in-



Chief. George the Third undertook in person the task of appealing to Amherst's loyalty, which he endeavoured further to stimulate by the offer of a peerage. In the disagreeable and disastrous war which was now at hand, titles were of use rather for the purpose of tempting men into active service, than of rewarding them when they returned from it. The veteran stated very plainly that he could not bring himself to serve against the Americans, "to whom he had been so much obliged." The King, with sincere regret, informed Dartmouth that Amherst could not be persuaded. It only remained, he said, to do the next best; to leave the command with Gage, and send to his assistance the ablest generals that could be thought of.

The choice of those generals was not an act of favouritism. George the Third, as long as he continued to transact public business, looked closely into all high military appointments which involved grave military responsibilities. His judgment was excellent save when as in the case of the Duke of York it was misled by considerations of family interest and of strong affection. Determined to have his armies well commanded, he set aside his personal inclinations and overcame his political prejudices. In time of peace and war alike, even when he was told that the salvation of the country depended on it, no importunity from a Cabinet which required strengthening could prevail on him to employ a statesman whom he regarded as an opponent. And between one war and another he was far from overlooking political considerations in his treatment of the army and the navy. Whenever a veteran, scarred with wounds and honoured throughout the whole service, ventured to give a vote displeasing to the King, he was harshly received at Court and ruthlessly deprived of the rewards which his valour had earned. But when hostilities broke out, if a famous soldier or sailor who had been wronged and slighted had any fight left in him, George the Third did not fail to display what moralists class as the rarest form of magnanimity,—that of overlooking the injuries which he himself had inflicted.

Ingratitude during peace, alternating with a tardy recognition of merit under the pressure of war, up to the very last marked George the Third's dealings with great soldiers whose politics displeased him. Sir John Moore complained that he was treated as a "bad subject" by the King, for whom he had been wounded five times, and the discipline and efficiency of whose army he had done more than any living man to restore. At length, when he was wanted for the chief command in Spain, George the Third "very graciously," and it must be owned



very frankly, said that a stop must be put to persecution, and that Sir John Moore "must not be plagued any more." Lord Lynedoch had been nothing but a Whig country gentleman till he was five and forty; and a Whig country gentleman he remained until he died at ninety-five with a military reputation second only to that of Wellington. He was even worse used than his friend and patron Sir John Moore; for the King angrily refused to give him army-rank. His Majesty quarrelled even with Lord Melville when that statesman protested against the treatment to which so distinguished an officer was exposed, and was quite prepared to quarrel over the same matter with Pitt. After Corunna, when such a sword as Graham's could not be suffered to remain idle, he at length received his due, and was sent as Wellington's right-hand man to the Peninsula, where he won Barossa and helped to win Vittoria.<sup>2</sup>

Chief among the three Major-Generals selected to serve in America in the spring of 1775 was William Howe, brother of the Admiral and of the Lord Howe who fell at Ticonderoga in the year 1758. That nobleman, who was an Irish viscount, had been member for Nottingham. When the news of his death reached England, his mother in pathetic terms urged the people of the city which her son had represented to replace him by his younger brother, who himself was then at the front with his regiment. So William Howe was nominated and chosen, and had sat for Nottingham ever since. At the general election of 1774 he told his constituents that the whole British army together would not be numerous enough to conquer America, and assured them that, if he were offered a command against the colonists, he would not scruple to refuse it. The King, who knew him as a splendid officer, the discipline of whose battalion had been a model, and whose gallantry was a proverb, was himself courageous enough to take the risk of a rebuff. When invited to sail for America, Howe inquired whether he was to consider the message as a request or an order; and on being informed that it was an order he obeyed it. He came back before the end of the Parliament, with a reputation for every military quality, except that of coolness under fire, sadly impaired,—to find at the next election that the freemen of Nottingham had good memories, and a different view of his personal obligations from that which he himself had held.

The next of the three was John Burgoyne. He had gone through the usual experiences of a distinguished military man who was likewise a

<sup>2</sup> Delavoye's *Life of Lord Lynedoch*, pp. 249, 250, 262, 269.

politician. He had been thanked in his seat in Parliament; he had received the governorship of a fortress in marked and special recognition of his brilliant valour; and he had been the subject of a letter in which the King told the Prime Minister that, if Colonel Burgoyne had not been prudent enough to vote for the Royal Marriage Bill, his Majesty would certainly have taken that governorship away. Burgoyne's sentiments towards the colonists were friendly, but his view of the legal and constitutional aspect of the controversy was not favourable to their claims. He agreed to serve against them without compunction, though he missed that sense of exhilaration which he had hitherto felt whenever he had gone to meet the enemy. He confessed his lack of enthusiasm to his Sovereign in a letter not unbecoming a soldier, but too long and too laboured, like all which Burgoyne ever wrote even under circumstances calculated to prune and chasten the most copious and flowery style.

The third Major-General was Henry Clinton, who had learned his trade under Prince Ferdinand during the Seven Years' War, and who now was member for Newark and a supporter of the Ministry. The dash and dexterity with which these officers, one and all, had seized their opportunities, in America, in Portugal, or in Germany, fully justified the King in his hope that they would be equal to larger enterprises; and the public opinion of the army confirmed his choice. The connection between war and politics, in the aristocratic England of four generations ago, was not less close than in the great days of ancient Rome. Then the scion of a consular family courted the suffrages of the people in order that he might go forth to command their legions, and returned to the senate from Spain, or Gaul, or Pontus, to be congratulated if he had triumphed, or to defend himself in case things had gone badly with him in the field. The three Major-Generals were all members of Parliament, and all remained members while year after year they were campaigning and administering thousands of miles away from Westminster. After the frightful miscarriages which befell them personally, or which had taken place under their auspices, they all resumed their seats on their accustomed bench in the House of Commons as naturally and quietly as if they had come back from a week of partridge shooting.

The expedient adopted was singularly unfortunate. If any one of the three had been invested with the command in chief, he would for the sake of his own reputation have applied to the War Office for as many regiments as could be spared from home duties; and, being on

the spot, he would have made his representations felt. But no Ministry will press upon an absent general larger means and appliances than those which he insists on having. Gage was the author of the pleasant theory that the military side of the difficulty would prove to be a very small matter. He now had begun to be alarmed, and wrote in vague terms about the necessity of being provided with "a very respectable force." But during his recent visit to England, speaking as a soldier who knew the colonies and who was responsible for keeping them, he had set going a notion that the Americans were unwarlike as a community, and pusillanimous as individuals. That agreeable and convenient idea had been eagerly caught up by the noisiest members of the Government, and had been employed by them in public as an argument against those who condemned their policy as hazardous. They had assured Parliament that a course of coercion would be effective, safe, and the very reverse of costly; and this they had done on Gage's authority. He had named a limited number of additional battalions as the outside which he would require in order to complete the business; and those battalions he should have, and not a musket more. The reinforcements which accompanied Howe and Burgoyne across the sea brought up the garrison at Boston to ten thousand men. It was an army powerful enough to inspire all the colonies with alarm for their independence, and so burdensome as to irritate Massachusetts beyond endurance. But it was utterly inadequate to the task of holding down New England, and ludicrously insufficient for the enterprise of conquering, and afterwards controlling, America. When the war had endured a twelvemonth David Hume,—who had lived through a very great period of our history, and had written almost all the rest of it,—pronounced that the show of statesmen in power, and generals and admirals in command, had up to that point been the poorest ever known in the annals of the country. Of those generals Gage was the first, and perhaps the worst; and in his combined quality of civil administrator, military leader, and above all of adviser to the Government in London, he played, for a very small man, a material and prominent part in the preparation of an immense catastrophe.

A Governor who was bound by statute to destroy the liberties of his province, and ruin the prosperity of its capital, had a very narrow margin within which he could display himself as a beneficent ruler. But there were two ways of discharging even such a commission. Obligated to punish, Gage should have avoided the appearance of enjoying the work on which he was employed unless he was prepared to abandon



the hope of ultimately playing the peacemaker; and that function was one among the many which he was called upon to fulfil. He had been confidentially instructed by the King to "insinuate to New York and such other colonies as were not guided by the madness of the times," proposals which might entice them back to due obedience, without putting "the dagger to their throats."<sup>3</sup> The General had already tried his hand at pacification. In October 1774 he wrote to the President of the Congress at Philadelphia congratulating him on his endeavours after a cordial reconciliation with the mother-country, and promising his own services as a mediator.<sup>4</sup> He might have spared his fine phrases; for he was the last man whose arbitration or intervention would have been accepted by any New Englander endowed with a grain of local patriotism. By making public reference to a hackneyed and offensive taunt he had done that which private persons seldom forgive, and communities never. To be called a saint by the unsaint-like is a form of canonisation which nowhere is held to be a compliment; and just now there was something too much of it in Boston. "The inhabitants of this colony," wrote an officer, "with the most austere show of devotion are void of every principle of religion or common honesty, and reckoned the most arrant cheats and hypocrites in America." That was the creed of the barracks; and Gage paid it the homage of a joke such as a parcel of subalterns might have concocted after mess, and been ashamed of long before the eldest of them had got his company. When Massachusetts, threatened in her liberties and her commerce, bowed her head, (though not in fear,) and set aside a day for prayer and fasting, he inflicted a deliberate and official insult on the people whom he governed by issuing a proclamation against Hypocrisy. Having thus paralysed for ever and a day his power of acting as an intercessor between the Crown and the colony, he informed the Cabinet that, public feeling in America being what it was, the penal Acts could not be enforced, and had much better be suspended.

Such a recommendation from the very man whose sanguine assurances had decoyed the Government into what he himself now confessed to be a Slough of Despond, was described by the King with pardonable impatience as "the most absurd course that could possibly be suggested." But whatever might be the quarter whence it emanated, the advice came on the top of tidings which foretokened that a river of blood would be set flowing unless it was acted upon without delay.

<sup>3</sup> George the Third to Dartmouth: Jan. 31, 1775.

<sup>4</sup> *Historical Manuscripts Commission*. Fourteenth Report, Appendix, Part X.



The cannon and stores of the Massachusetts Militia were kept at and near Cambridge. Gage now learned the ominous circumstance that the several townships of the province had begun quietly to withdraw their share of the ammunition. On the first of September 1774 before sunrise, he despatched an expedition from Boston, by road and river, which took possession of a couple of field pieces and two hundred and fifty kegs of powder, and lodged them securely behind the ramparts of the Castle. The performance was smart, and the most was made of it, not so much by the vanity of the author as by the apprehensions of those against whom it had been projected. The truth was spread all over Middlesex county in a few hours. It ran through the New England colonies with the speed and the growing dimensions of a rumour; and, by the time it got to New York and Philadelphia, good patriots professed to know for certain that a British man-of-war had fired on the people and had killed six of them at the first shot. In some such shape the news reached London; and all the friends and all the foes of America believed that Gage had made good his boasts and his promises, and that the colonists, at the first glint of a bayonet, had indeed proved themselves such as Rigby and Sandwich had represented them.

Charles Fox expressed his thoughts to Edmund Burke in a letter which has been quoted ere now in condemnation of them both, but which proves nothing worse than that the patriotism of the two statesmen embraced their fellow-countrymen on both sides of the Atlantic. "Though your opinions," Fox wrote, "have turned out to be but too true, I am sure you will be far enough from triumphing in your foresight. What a melancholy consideration for all thinking men that no people, animated by what principle soever, can make a successful resistance to military discipline! I do not know that I was ever so affected with any public event, either in history or life. The introduction of great standing armies into Europe has then made all mankind irrevocably slaves!" The consideration which most depressed him was "the sad figure which *men* made against *soldiers*." Fox's remarks, however, were based on a curious and total misapprehension of the facts. As fast as the report of the seizure of the powder travelled up and down the coast and among the inland villages, the neighbours flocked to each centre of resort, and remained together throughout the night. Next morning many thousand people converged on Cambridge. They arrived with sticks and without fire-arms; as citizens, and not as militia; under the command of a Selectman of their township or a member

of their Committee of Correspondence. The General had taken a step implying war; and they, as civilians, had come for the grave purpose of doing that which meant revolution. Oliver, the Lieutenant-Governor of the province, who resided at Cambridge, had gone into Boston for the purpose of entreating Gage to keep his troops within their barracks. The distance to and fro between the two towns was only what a sophomore of Harvard College would cover for his daily exercise between lecture and chapel. But Oliver who knew his countrymen as one who feared them, and Joseph Warren as one who loved and led them, were agreed in their opinion that, if a detachment marched, it would never find its way back to Boston.

It was Oliver whom the people sought, and they waited with full knowledge of the purpose for which they wanted him. They kept their hand in during his absence by taking pledges of renunciation of office from a High Sheriff, and two Mandamus Councillors. When the Lieutenant-Governor came back with what he intended to be the welcome announcement that no armed force was on the road from Boston, they requested him formally to resign his post; and after some gasconading on his part, which they endured very stolidly, he acceded to their desire. Then, standing closely packed beneath the rays of the hottest sun which had shone during that summer, they began like true Americans to pass Resolutions; acknowledging that Gage, when he removed the powder, had not violated the constitution; and voting unanimously their abhorrence of mobs and riots, and of the destruction of private property. The British General in anxious self-defence wrote to the Ministry at home that they were no town rabble, but the freeholders and farmers of the county. Guided by their own good sense, and by the advisers on whom they had been accustomed to rely in the ordinary transaction of civil business, they exhibited a firmness combined with moderation which reassured those who, with Charles Fox, expected little from the behaviour of *men* when placed in opposition to *soldiers*. Soldiers, however, within a few days, and not many hours, they might have had in abundance; for the contingents from the more distant regions, where the alarm was greater and the exasperation not less, came armed and in martial array. Israel Putnam, his deeper feelings touched to the quick by the loss of the material for so many good cartridges, took upon himself to call out the militia of Connecticut, and sent the fiery cross far and wide over the continent. Twenty thousand musketeers were already on foot, with their faces towards the mouth of the Charles River, when they were turned back by expresses

from Boston bearing the intelligence that for the present everything was well over. Putnam, proud of the result, if only half pleased at the ease with which it had been attained, replied by an assurance that, but for the counter orders, double the force would have been on the move in another twenty-four hours. And he took the opportunity of giving the people of Massachusetts an admonition, (the more mundane part of which he evidently thought that they needed,) to put their trust in God and mind to keep their powder safe.<sup>5</sup>

The Boston patriots were never again caught napping; and they very soon commenced a system of reprisals, or rather of depredations on their own property, which kept both the garrison and the squadron awake. One night, within hearing of the nearest man-of-war, if only the officer of the watch had known what they were about, they withdrew the cannon from a battery at Charlestown, which commanded the entrance of the inner harbour. Another night they removed four pieces which were stored in the neighbourhood of the Common. Their audacity and ubiquity were so bewildering that Admiral Graves, who now was conducting the blockade, could think of no better expedient than that of spiking the guns which, from the North point of the city, bore upon the roadstead where his ships were lying. At other seaports, to which the royal navy was only an occasional visitor, the inhabitants were still more free to act; and in laying hands on what belonged to their colony they felt that they had on their side the moral law, or at any rate as much of it as sufficed for their simple needs. At Portsmouth in New Hampshire the Sons of Liberty entered the fort in broad daylight, to the sound of music. Disregarding the remonstrances of half a dozen invalids who were quartered in the precincts, they carried off sixteen cannon and a hundred barrels of powder with which to load them.

Outside the glacis of the earthworks which General Gage in hot haste was now constructing across Boston Neck, British rule was dead. The condition of New England then, and throughout the winter, has no parallel in history. Elsewhere provinces and nations, while in open and declared revolt against their former rulers, have been under the control of an organised and established government of their own. But by the end of the year 1774, throughout the northern colonies, the old machinery of administration had ceased to work, and it had not

<sup>5</sup> "We much desire you to keep a strict guard over the remainder of your powder; for that must be the great means, under God, of the salvation of our country."



been replaced by new. Elsewhere, as in provincial France after the fall of the Bastille, and in rural Ireland more than once in the course of more than one century, the written law lost its terrors and was not obeyed. But in New England, though the tribunals were void and silent, crime was repressed and private rights were secure, because the people were a law to themselves. It was as if in a quiet English county there were no assizes, no quarter and petty sessions, and no official personage above the rank of a parish overseer. The Selectmen of the townships were the most exalted functionaries who continued to perform their duties. Power rested in each locality with the Committees of Correspondence; and the central authority was the revolutionary convention, or (as it called itself) the Congress, of the colony.

In Massachusetts that Congress had even less than a legal title; for it sate, deliberated, and even existed in defiance of the constitution. Gage had appointed the Assembly to meet at Salem at the commencement of October; but before that date arrived he thought better of it, and issued a proclamation declining to be present as Governor, and discharging the elected representatives from the obligation of attendance. The document was unusual in form, but perfectly clear in meaning. If the members of the Assembly took the course enjoined upon them, all hope of continuing the struggle was over, and they would have nothing to do except to sit by their firesides with hands folded till their fate overtook them. True indeed it was that the Congress of all the provinces was still in session at the capital of Pennsylvania; but the popular leaders of Massachusetts would look in vain to that quarter for protection. It was a far cry to Philadelphia, and the danger was knocking at their own door. The Continental Congress was nothing more than an aggregation of delegates, provided only with general instructions, of varying fulness and tenor, from the colonies by which they were severally commissioned. Those delegates in their corporate capacity were not inclined to usurp executive functions; and they did not as yet think fit to go beyond the stage of presenting to the world, in a precise and forcible shape, the case against the British Government. To make good that case by arms,—and to arms it was plain that the decision must speedily come,—it was essential that there should be an authority furnished with powers which, whether constitutional or not, were recognised and respected by the people in whose name they were exercised; an authority planted on the scene of action, and inspired by that sort of unanimity and energy which actuates men who know that, if they do not pursue their forward march together and



to the end, they have already gone much too far for their personal safety.

The Massachusetts Assembly met. After waiting two days for the Governor who never came, the members constituted themselves into a Congress and adjourned from Salem to the more remote and inaccessible retreat of Concord. Hebrew or English, the names of the two places had little in common with the mood in which these men set forth upon their up-country journey.<sup>6</sup> True to their national origin, they took some pains to define their constitutional position, and to defend it by adducing precedents and quoting charters. But they had attention to spare for more pressing business. They commenced by ordering "that all the matters that come before the Congress be kept secret, and be not disclosed to any but the members thereof until further order of this body." Then, on the twenty-fourth of October, they appointed a Committee to consider the proper time for laying in warlike stores; and on the same day the Committee reported that the proper time was now. And therefore without delay they voted the purchase of twenty field pieces and four mortars; twenty tons of grape and round-shot; five thousand muskets and bayonets, and seventy-five thousand flints. They made an agreement to pay no more taxes into the royal Treasury. They arranged a system of assessment for the purposes of provincial defence, and made a first appropriation of ninety thousand dollars. They then proceeded to elect by ballot three generals. They appointed a Committee of Public Safety, of which John Hancock was the most notable and Joseph Warren the most active member. They invested that Committee with authority to call out the militia, every fourth man of whom was expected to hold himself ready to march at a minute's notice;—a condition of service that suggested the name of Minute-men by which the earlier soldiers of the Revolution were called. And, having done the best they knew, they adjourned until the fourth Wednesday in November; by which time the Committee of Public Safety, disbursing their funds thriftily, had bought, in addition to the prescribed amount of ordnance, three hundred and fifty spades and pickaxes, a thousand wooden mess-bowls, and some pease and flour. That was their stock of material wherewith to fight the empire which recently, with hardly any sense of distress, had maintained a long war against France and Spain, and had left them humbled and half ruined at the end of it.

Whether on a large or small scale, the irrevocable step was taken.

<sup>6</sup> "Being King of Salem, which is, King of Peace."—Hebrews vii. 2.

The Massachusetts congressmen were fully aware that, with the first dollar which passed into the coffers of their own Receiver-General, the game of armed resistance had begun, and nothing remained except to play it out. Men in power had called them rebels rudely and prematurely; and rebels they now were in fierce earnest. In a series of Resolutions every one of which the most indulgent Attorney-General, without thinking twice about it, would pronounce to be flat treason, they gave consistence and direction to the seething excitement of the province. They recommended to the inhabitants of the several towns and districts that any person who supplied intrenching tools, boards for gun platforms, or draught oxen and horses, to the troops in Boston, ought to be deemed an inveterate enemy to America and held in the highest detestation. The methods of expressing that detestation they left, as they safely might, to local effort and initiative; for ten years of almost unintermittent agitation had perfected New Englanders in the science of making themselves unpleasant to those whom they regarded as bad friends of the cause. They most solemnly exhorted "the Militia in general, as well as the detached part of it in Minute-men, in obedience to the great law of self-preservation," to spare neither trouble nor expense over the task of perfecting themselves in their exercises. And in April 1775, taking more upon them as time went on and perils thickened, they framed and issued a paper of Rules and Regulations for the Massachusetts army. They were not afraid to notify that whatever officer or soldier shamefully abandoned a post committed to his charge, or induced others to do the like when under fire, should suffer death immediately. Nor were they ashamed to lay down what, according to the tradition of their colony, was the right preparation for that frame of mind in which homely and half-trained men may best meet the stress of danger. All officers and soldiers who, not having just impediment, failed diligently to frequent divine service and to behave decently and reverently when present at it, were to be fined for the benefit of sick poor comrades. The same penalty was imposed upon any who were guilty of profane cursing and swearing.

Their statement of the circumstances on which they grounded the necessity for tightening the bonds of military discipline differed widely from the preamble of the Mutiny Act which annually was placed on the Statute-book at Westminster. That statement consisted in an outspoken vindication of religious and political convictions, ennobled and elevated by the pride of ancestry. "Whereas the lust of power," such was the wording of the recital, "which of old persecuted and

exiled our pious and virtuous ancestors from their fair possessions in Britain, now pursues with tenfold severity their guiltless children; and being deeply impressed with a sense of the almost incredible fatigues and hardships our venerable progenitors encountered, who fled from oppression for the sake of civil and religious liberty for themselves and their offspring; and having seriously considered the duty we owe to God, to the memory of such invincible worthies, to the King, to Great Britain, our country, ourselves, and our posterity, we do think it our indispensable duty to recover, maintain, defend, and preserve the free exercise of all those rights and liberties for which many of our forefathers bled and died. And whereas we are frequently told by the tools of the Administration that Great Britain will not relax in her measures until we acknowledge her right of making laws binding upon us in all cases whatever, and that if we persist in our denial of her claim the dispute must be decided by arms, in which it is said we shall have no chance, being undisciplined, cowards, disobedient, impatient of control;”—and so the passage continued to run in phrases clearly showing that its authors had got hold of some sentences which English ministers had recently spoken in Parliament, and were putting their discovery to a telling but most justifiable use.

Having invested themselves with the responsibility of dictating the policy of the colony, and the equipping it for self-defence, the representatives of Massachusetts remained together either at Cambridge or at Concord, (as the chance of interruption by the armed hand of authority was less or more present to their minds,) through the rigours of a New England winter. In consideration of the coldness of the season, and that the Congress met in a room without a fire, it was resolved that the members who inclined thereto might keep on their hats. Resembling in that respect, but in few others, the British House of Commons, they sate almost continuously; although they adjourned for some days in order to observe a Thanksgiving appointed in acknowledgment of the special protection which Heaven had extended to the colony of Massachusetts. Determined to be thankful, they detected a mark of Divine favour in the unanimity with which their province had faced the crisis. By their fervent recognition of a blessing that, after all, was mainly due to themselves, they gave Providence, on the eve of a doubtful war, a significant indication of the gratitude which they were prepared to feel for such greater mercies as it might have in store for them.



These proceedings, whatever figure they might eventually make in history, were not of a nature to be contemplated with equanimity by the British garrison. Our troops had hitherto behaved on the whole quite as well as could be expected from men who were planted down in such a place for such a purpose. But, by the time the winter was over, their patience had reached its limit. In the first week of March the townspeople assembled to hear the annual address in celebration of the event which was popularly known as the Boston Massacre. The scene had been described by an eye-witness, whose point of view is not disguised by his narrative. "In the pulpit were Warren, the orator of the day, Hancock, Adams,<sup>7</sup> Church, and others. Some of the gentlemen of the army had placed themselves on the top of the pulpit stairs. Officers frequently interrupted Warren by laughing loudly at the most ludicrous parts, and coughing and hemming at the most seditious, to the great discontent of the devoted citizens. The oration however was finished, and it was moved by Adams that an orator should be named for the ensuing fifth of March, to commemorate the bloody and horrid massacre perpetrated by a party of soldiers under the command of Captain Preston. At this the officers could no longer contain themselves, but called 'Fie! Shame!' and 'Fie! Shame!' was echoed by all the Navy and Military in the place. This caused a violent confusion, and in an instant the windows were thrown open and the affrighted Yankees jumped out by fifties."

The ludicrous parts of Warren's speech were, it may be presumed, his references to the Bible; and the promise (which he kept) to give his life in case his life was wanted. And, as a matter of fact, they were women who escaped by the windows.<sup>8</sup> In the spring of 1775 it took something more than a loud noise to make New England men leave a spot where their duty called on them to stay. The commotion grew from bad to worse until an officer, "dressed in gold lace regimentals, with blue lapels," thought fit to put a gross affront upon the

<sup>7</sup> This was Samuel Adams. John Adams in a former year declined to take the principal part in the ceremony, on the ground that he had acted as Captain Preston's advocate. "Though the subject of the Oration," he said, "was compatible with the verdict of the Jury, and indeed even with the absolute innocence of the soldiers, yet I found the world in general were not capable or not willing to make the distinction; and therefore I should only expose myself to the lash of ignorant and malicious tongues on both sides of the question." In 1774 he attended the meeting, and heard with admiration John Hancock, who might be trusted not to fall below the topmost altitude of the occasion; and he would most certainly have agreed with every syllable which in 1775 came from the lips of Warren.

<sup>8</sup> *American Archives*: March 8, 1775.



Chairman of the meeting. In the course of the next fortnight the army broke loose from restraint, or rather from self-restraint; for those who ought to have kept others in order were the prime actors in every successive manifestation of partisanship. The day of prayer and fasting ordained by Congress for the whole colony was observed with marked solemnity in the churches of Boston. On that day the members of a corps, which was bent on deserving its title of *The King's Own*, pitched two "marquee tents" within ten yards of the chapel at the West End of the city, and played their drums and fifes as long as the service lasted, while their Colonel looked approvingly on. Real or reputed patriots of all grades in society became the objects of insult and, where a plausible excuse could be found, of personal violence. A party of officers broke Hancock's windows, and hacked the railing in front of it with their swords. A country fellow who had been tempted (or, as his friends asserted, entrapped) into buying a gun from a soldier, was tarred and feathered in the guardhouse of the regiment and paraded about the streets on a truck, escorted by a crowd of all ranks from the commanding officer downwards, and preceded by a band playing "Yankee Doodle."

Those strains were not agreeable hearing for the crowd before whose pinched and anxious faces the procession passed. In and about the town there was plenty of employment to be had which would have kept Boston children plump, and Boston cottages warm and garnished. But for six months past all the mechanics had struck work on the Barracks, and the roughest labourer refused to turn a sod at the fortifications. They hung outside the shops where bricklayers and carpenters, fetched from Nova Scotia, or (a reflection more bitter still) even from New York, were freely spending the excellent wages which in such a strait the Government was only too glad to pay. They stood in line at the doors of the Donation Committee, waiting for their allowance of meal, and rice, and salt fish, the further supply of which was at that very moment in the act of being cut off by the legislation of the British Parliament. They took their turn of labour on municipal industries extemporised under the superintendence of the Selectmen, and paid for out of the savings of that middle-class which, as the artisans had the good sense to foresee and the neighbourly feeling to regret, would soon be as poor as themselves.

It was a cheerless season; but for those who looked in the right quarter there still were smiling visages to be seen. "My spirits were very good," a lady said, "until one Saturday riding into town I found

the Neck beset with soldiers; the cannon hoisted; and many Tories on the Neck, and many more going up to see the encampment with the greatest pleasure in their countenances, which gave a damp that I had not before felt." The inner thoughts of these people may be read in a letter from Dr. Samuel Peters, of Hebron in Connecticut. That divine had taken sanctuary in Boston after having been rabbled at home by fellow-townsmen whom he had sorely provoked, if any provocation could excuse outrage. "I am in high spirits," he wrote. "Six regiments are now coming from England, and sundry men-of-war. So soon as they come, hanging work will go on, and destruction will first attend the seaport towns. The lintel sprinkled on the side-posts will preserve the faithful." Years afterwards, when Peters had long been resident in England, his old parishioners learned with interest that the style of preaching which had given displeasure at Hebron was too strong meat even for a congregation of Londoners. A brother exile, who heard Peters deliver a sermon in an English metropolitan pulpit, said that "it was hard to conceive how he got there."<sup>9</sup>

On week-days, when the Episcopal churches were closed, the Boston Tories could draw comfort from the periodical effusions of a vigorous writer, the style of whose prophecies and invectives proved that neither side in the great American controversy had a monopoly of grandiloquence. According to "Massachusettensis," the Boston Committee of Correspondence was the foulest, subtlest, and most venomous thing that had ever issued from the eggs of the serpent of sedition;—a knot of demagogues, who did for their dupes no more solid service than that of inducing them to swallow a chimera for breakfast. The point of the observation was all the sharper at a time when the families of citizens who followed Hancock and Warren were in a fair way to have very little indeed that was more substantial for breakfast, dinner, or supper either. Such was the condition of mutual charity and goodwill to which George the Third had reduced the inhabitants of a colony into whose local elections, at a date as recent as ten years before, the element of political partisanship had not even entered. 1766 was the first year in which the Selectmen of even so considerable a place as Braintree were chosen for their politics. The waters of strife had then been first stirred by a violent Tory sermon. On the next Sunday a Whig clergyman replied by preaching from the text, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's"; from which things he specially excepted the price of stamps bearing Cæsar's head.

<sup>9</sup> Sabine's *Loyalists*, vol. ii.

The royalists in Boston, as they watched the reviews on the Common, and listened to the professional opinions which were freely delivered around them, never doubted of a rapid and triumphant issue. Reinforcements continued to arrive from England, and a large body of marines was landed from the squadron. By the end of the year there were eleven battalions in garrison; weak, for the most part, in numbers; but well-housed, splendidly equipped, and brimming over with confidence. The British officers set a high value on the fighting quality of their own men, which indeed it was not easy to over-rate. But the estimation in which they held the colonists was not creditable to their habits of observation or to their knowledge of military history, and said very little indeed for the worth of oral military tradition. "As to what you hear of their taking arms, it is mere bullying, and will go no further than words. Whenever it comes to blows, he that can run fastest will think himself best off. Any two regiments here ought to be decimated if they did not beat in the field the whole force of the Massachusetts province; for though they are numerous, they are but a mere mob without order or discipline, and very awkward in handling their arms."

That was the view of the regimental officers, who were unaware of the fact that colonists, so far from being awkward with their weapons, were as a rule marksmen before they became soldiers. The familiar conversation of the staff, which ought to have been better informed, was in the same strain. The Quartermaster-General wrote home that Congress had appointed three scoundrels to command the militia. It was the very reverse of the real case. The first commanders of the American forces had indeed, as always happens at the commencement of a civil war, the defects of leaders chosen on account of exploits performed many years before; but they were of blameless and even rigid character. In the days of their early renown, they had gone forth against the power of France in the stern conviction that they themselves were the champions of Protestantism. Seth Pomeroy, a good man, but no better than his colleagues, had seen the hardest service of the three. In September 1755 he was colonel of a Massachusetts regiment at the action of Lake George, fought by a colonial officer at the head of sixteen or seventeen hundred rustics, very few of whom had been under fire before, against an army largely composed of regulars. The general of the French, in the lightness of his heart, encouraged his soldiers with the assurance that American Militiamen were the worst troops on the face of the earth. After the battle, a prisoner with

three bullets in him, he pronounced that in the morning the New Englanders had fought like good boys, at noon like men, and in the afternoon like devils; and at all times of the day their aim was such that their adversaries "dropped like pigeons." Pomeroy, who was employed to bury the slain, took measures to preserve the French dead from the indignities of the Indian scalping-knife. He had lost a brother in the battle. "Dear Sister," he wrote, "this brings heavy tidings: but let not your heart sink at the news, though it be your loss of a dear husband. Monday was a memorable day; and truly you may say, had not the Lord been on our side, we must all have been swallowed up." It was not the letter of a scoundrel.<sup>10</sup> But the deeds of the colonists in former battles, though well remembered in Paris, were forgotten at British mess-tables. In all ranks of our army there unhappily prevailed that contempt of the enemy before the event which is the only bad omen in war;—quite another sentiment from the invaluable consciousness of superiority arising from the experience of victory.

The latest comers had some excuse for their ignorance of the country; for between them and the outer world an impenetrable veil was spread. Inside Boston there was little to be learned. Whenever a scarlet coat was in the company, Whigs kept their own counsel; and Tories spoke only pleasant things which, human nature being what it was, they had honestly taught themselves to believe. Beyond the fortifications, over a breadth of many score of miles, lay a zone of peril and mystery. Officers could not venture to leave the precincts of the garrison unless they were accompanied by a strong force in military array; and in the case even of such a force its reception depended upon the character of its errand. When the General was contented to march his people out in order to march them back again,—without attempting to impound military stores or arrest political leaders,—the expedition encountered nothing more formidable than black looks and closed shutters. In January 1775 a party of infantry proceeded to Marshfield, with the object of protecting the formation of a Loyal Militia, and took them fire-arms in greater numbers than there were loyalists in the neighbourhood to carry them. The troops preserved exact discipline. They molested no one, and no one molested them. As long as they stayed in the town, (so a Government newspaper in New York boasted,) every faithful subject there residing dared freely to utter his thoughts and drink his tea. But when they left Marshfield, and returned to Boston, the Loyal Militia disappeared from history, and General Gage

<sup>10</sup> Parkman's *Montcalm and Wolfe*, vol. i., chapter 9.



would have felt more easy if he had been certain that their muskets had disappeared with them.

A month afterwards Colonel Leslie sailed to Marblehead, for the purpose of seizing some artillery which the provincials had deposited at Salem as a place of comparative security. He landed his detachment successfully on a Sunday morning; but, when the alarm reached the nearest meeting-house, the congregation turned out and took up a position upon some water which barred his route. They refused to lower the draw-bridge, on the plea that there was no public right of way across it; and, when Leslie attempted to lay hands on a couple of barges, the owners proceeded to scuttle them. The soldiers drew their bayonets, and inflicted some wounds not so wide as the church-door from which the patriots had issued, and only just deep enough to allow Salem to claim the honour of the first drops of blood which were shed in the Revolution. A loyalist clergyman intervened. The people agreed to lower the bridge, and Leslie pledged his honour not to advance thirty rods beyond it. Brave to imprudence when duty as well as danger lay clear before him, he was not prepared, without specific orders from a high quarter, to light the match which would set the thirteen colonies in a blaze. He recalled his men, and re-embarked them empty-handed just as the company of minute-men from the next township, with plenty more of their like to follow, came marching in to the help of Salem.

A countryside, in this state of effervescence, presented few attractions even to the most adventurous officers of the garrison; whether they were sportsmen, or students of manners, or explorers of the picturesque. But nevertheless one of their number has left a narrative which affords a glimpse of New England in the February of 1775. Gage despatched a captain and an ensign through the counties of Suffolk and Worcester, with a commission to sketch the roads, to observe and report upon the defiles, and to obtain information about forage and provisions. They dressed themselves as countrymen, in "brown clothes, and reddish handkerchiefs." Their disguise was so far artistic that, on their return, the General and his staff mistook them for what they pretended to be; though during their expedition no one, either friend or foe, looked at them twice without detecting what they were. They stopped at a tavern for their dinner, which was brought them by a black woman. "At first she was very civil, but afterwards began to eye us very attentively. We observed to her that it was a very fine country, upon which she answered, 'So it is, and we have got

brave fellows to defend it.'” Downstairs she told the soldier-servant, who looked still less of a ploughman than his masters, that, if his party went any higher up, they would meet with very bad usage. Towards the close of the day they came to a village where they had a more hearty, but a not less alarming, welcome. “We stopped at the sign of the Golden Ball, with the intention to take a drink, and so proceed. But the landlord pleased us so much, as he was not inquisitive, that we resolved to lie there that night; so we ordered some fire to be made, and to get us some coffee. He told us we might have what we pleased, either Tea or Coffee.” Their relief on hearing the Shibboleth of loyalty was more than balanced by the reflection that this landlord was not inquisitive only because he had seen all he wanted without needing to ask a single question.

Another stage of their journey brought them to Worcester. “The next day being Sunday we could not think of travelling, as it was not the custom of the country. Nor dare we stir out until the evening, because nobody is allowed to walk the street during divine service without being taken up and examined: so that we thought it prudent to stay at home, where we wrote and corrected our sketches. On our asking what the landlord could give us for breakfast, he told us Tea or anything else we chose. That was an open confession what he was: but for fear he might be imprudent, we did not tell him who we were, though we were certain he knew it. At Shrewsbury we were overtaken by a horseman who examined us very attentively, and especially me, whom he looked at from head to foot as if he wanted to know me again, and then rode off pretty hard.” They got their meal at an inn, and had an opportunity of watching from the window a company of militia at drill. “The commander made a very eloquent speech, recommending patience, coolness, and bravery, (which indeed they much wanted;) quoted Cæsar, Pompey, and Brigadiers Putnam and Ward; recommended them to wait for the English fire, and told them they would always conquer if they did not break; put them in mind of Cape Breton, and observed that the Regulars in the last war must have been ruined but for them. After a learned and spirited harangue he dismissed the parade, and the whole company drank until nine o’clock, and then returned to their homes full of pot-valour.” The allusion to Cape Breton showed that the rank and file of the colonial militia were familiar with the true history of that first siege of Louisburg which Sandwich had so woefully garbled for the amusement of the Peers.

On their way to Marlborough the two officers were accosted by riders, who asked them point-blank whether they were in the army, and then passed on towards the town. They arrived after nightfall, in what now would be called a blizzard; but the street was alive and buzzing. They were waylaid and interrogated by a baker who, as they afterwards learned, had a deserter from their own regiment harboured on his premises. They had hardly entered the dwelling of Mr. Barnes, a well-to-do loyalist, when the town-doctor, who had not been inside their host's door for two years past, invited himself to supper and fell to cross-examining the children about their father's guests. They were sent off again into the darkness at once, and not a minute too soon; for immediately after their departure the Committee of Correspondence invaded the house, searched it from garret to cellar, and told the owner that, if they had caught his visitors under his roof, they would have pulled it down about his ears.<sup>11</sup> It was not until the travellers had completed a march of two and thirty miles through wind and snow that they reached a friendly refuge, and were comforted with a bottle of mulled Madeira, and a bed where they could rest in safety. Next morning they walked back to Boston, having enjoyed the rare privilege of being in contact with an Anglo-Saxon population as highly charged with electricity as any among the Latin races at the most exciting junctures of their history.

At last the thunder-cloud broke, and flash after flash lit up the gloom which overhung the land. Gage, rather because he was expected to take some forward step, than because he saw clearly where to go, conceived the idea of destroying the stores which had been collected at Concord. The force told off for this service, according to a faulty practice of those times, consisted of detachments from many regiments; and the officer in charge of the whole was incompetent. The troops started before midnight. At four in the morning, just as an April day was breaking, they reached the village of Lexington, and found sixty or seventy of the local militia waiting for them on the common. Firing ensued, and the Americans were dispersed, leaving seven of their number dead or dying. It was a chilly and a depressing prologue to a mighty drama. The British advanced to Concord, where they spoiled

<sup>11</sup> *American Archives*: Feb 22, 1775. The entertainer of these officers paid dearly for his opinions. An important Whig, whose goods were within the British lines at Boston, was allowed by way of compensation to use the furniture of the Marlborough loyalist for his own so long as the siege lasted. Mr. Barnes was subsequently proscribed and banished. He died in London.



some flour, knocked the trunnions off three iron guns, burned a heap of wooden spoons and trenchers, and cut down a Liberty pole. In order to cover these trumpery operations a party of a hundred infantry had been stationed at a bridge over the neighbouring river, and towards ten o'clock they were attacked by about thrice as many provincials, who came resolutely on. After two or three had fallen on either side, the regulars gave way and retreated in confusion upon their main body in the centre of the town.

Pages and pages have been written about the history of each ten minutes in that day, and the name of every colonist who played a part is a household word in America. The main outlines of the affair are beyond dispute. When Colonel Smith discovered that there was nothing for him to do at Concord, and made up his mind to return to Boston, he should have returned forthwith. As it was, he delayed till noon; and those two hours were his ruin. The provincials who had been engaged at the bridge did not push their advantage. They hesitated to act as if war had been openly declared against England; and they were not in a vindictive frame of mind, as they had heard nothing beyond a vague report of the affair at Lexington. But by the time the British commander had completed his arrangements for withdrawing from his position the whole country was up, in front, around, and behind him. Those who came from the direction of the sea knew what had taken place that day at early dawn; and, where they had got the story wrong, it was in a shape which made them only the more angry. From every quarter of the compass over thirty miles square the Ezras, and Abners, and Silases were trooping in. The rural township of Woburn "turned out extraordinary," and marched into action a hundred and eighty strong. The minute-men of Dedham, encouraged by the presence of a company of veterans who had fought in the French wars, spent, but did not waste, the time that was required to hear a prayer from their clergyman as they stood on the green in front of the church steps. Then they started on their way, "leaving the town almost literally without a male inhabitant before the age of seventy, and above that of sixteen." Carrying guns which had been used in old Indian battles, and headed by drums which had beat at Louisburg, they covered the hillsides and swarmed among the enclosures and the coppices in such numbers that it seemed to their adversaries "as if men had dropped from the clouds." It was a calamity for the British that the first encounter of the war took place under circumstances which made their success a military impossibility. When



a force, no larger than the rear-guard of an army, is obliged to retreat and to continue retreating, the extent of the disaster is only a question of the amount of ground that has to be traversed, and of the activity and audacity which the enemy display. The colonists knew the distance at which their fire was effective, and were determined, at any personal risk, to get and to remain within that range. The English regimental officers, whenever one of them could collect a few privates of his own corps, made a good fight during the earlier stage of the retreat. But, before they emerged from the woods which lined most of the six miles between Concord and Lexington, ammunition began to fail; the steadier men were largely employed in helping the wounded along; many of the soldiers rather ran than marched in order; and the column passed through Lexington a beaten and, unless speedy help should come, a doomed force.

They had still before them twice as much road as they had travelled already. But the very worst was over; because a few furlongs beyond the town they were met by the reserves from Boston. The supporting body was better composed than their own, for it was made up of whole regiments; and it was much better commanded. Lord Percy, owing to stupid blunders which were no fault of his, should have been at Concord by eleven in the morning instead of being near Lexington at two in the afternoon; but, now that he was on the ground, he proved that he knew his business. He disposed the field pieces which he had brought with him in such a manner as to check the provincials and give a welcome respite to Colonel Smith's exhausted soldiers. When the homeward march recommenced, he fought strongly and skilfully from point to point. The hottest work of the whole day was as far along the line of retreat as West Cambridge. It was there that an example was made of some minute-men who had covered sixteen miles in four hours in order to occupy a post of vantage, and who were too busy towards their front to notice that there was danger behind them in the shape of a British flanking party. But the Americans were in great heart, and they were briskly and gallantly led. The senior officer present was General Heath, a brave and honest man, who had learned war from books, but who did well enough on a day when the most essential quality in a commander was indifference to bullets. And Warren had hurried up from Boston, eager to show that his oration of the month before was not a string of empty words. "They have begun it," he said, as he was waiting to cross the Ferry. "That either party could do. And we will end it. That only one can do."

From the moment that he came under fire at Lexington he was as conspicuous on the one side as Lord Percy on the other; and there was not much to choose between the narrowness of their escapes, for the New Englander had the hair-pin shot out of a curl, and the Northumbrian had a button shot off his waistcoat.

No courage or generalship on the part of the British commander could turn a rearward march into a winning battle. As the afternoon wore on, his men had expended nearly all their cartridges; and they had nothing to eat, for the waggons containing their supplies had been captured by the exertions of a parish minister. "I never broke my fast," so a soldier related, "for forty-eight hours, for we carried no provisions. I had my hat shot off my head three times. Two balls went through my coat, and carried away my bayonet from my side."<sup>12</sup> The provincials had surmounted their respect for the cannon, and kept at closer quarters than ever. As the tumult rolled eastwards into the thickly inhabited districts near the coast, the militia came up in more numerous and stronger companies, fresh and with full pouches. When the sun was setting the retiring troops, half starved and almost mad with thirst, came to a halt on the English side of the causeway over which the Cambridge highway entered the peninsula of Charlestown. They were only just in time. "From the best accounts I have been able to collect," Washington wrote six weeks later on, "I believe the fact, stripped of all colouring, to be plainly this: that if the retreat had not been as precipitate as it was, (and God knows it could not well have been more so,) the ministerial troops must have surrendered, or been totally cut off. For they had not arrived in Charlestown, under cover of their ships, half an hour before a powerful body of men from Marblehead and Salem was at their heels, and must, if they had happened to be up one hour sooner, inevitably have intercepted their retreat to Charlestown." That was the conclusion at which Washington arrived; and his view, then or since, has never been disputed.<sup>13</sup>

The Americans lost from ninety to a hundred men, of whom more than half were killed outright; and the British about three times as many. The strategic results of the affair were out of all proportion to the numbers engaged in it; for it settled the character and direction of the first campaign in the Revolutionary war. For fifteen months to come the British army did not again take the open field. Bunker's Hill

<sup>12</sup> *American Archives*: Letter of April 28, 1775.

<sup>13</sup> Washington from Philadelphia to George William Fairfax in England; May 31, 1775.

was but a sortie on a large scale, and ranks only as a terrible and glorious episode in the operations of a siege which, by the time the battle was fought, had already lasted for the space of eight weeks. For when Lord Percy crossed Charlestown Neck, and General Heath halted on Charlestown Common, the invasion of Massachusetts by the English was over, and the blockade of Boston by the Americans had begun. In the previous December the Secretary at War had confided his anticipations to the Secretary for the Colonies. "I doubt," so his letter ran, "whether all the troops in North America, though probably enow for a pitched battle with the strength of the Province, are enow to subdue it: being of great extent, and full of men accustomed to fire-arms. It is true they have not been thought brave, but enthusiasm gives vigour of mind and body unknown before."<sup>14</sup> As Lord Barrington had turned his attention to the subject of courage, it was a pity that he could not find enough of it to tell his views to the King and the Bedfords, instead of writing them to Dartmouth, who knew them already. But at sundown on the nineteenth of April the event had spoken; and it mattered little now what the English Ministers said, or left unsaid, among themselves.

*After Lexington, Trevelyan takes us to Bunker Hill—heroics for which praise is generously bestowed on defenders and attackers alike. Then he describes how Washington organized a rabble in arms and laid siege to Boston. The scene of the British embarkation "resembled the emigration of a nation rather than the breaking up of a garrison." The campaign of Boston was at an end. "England had never reaped so little glory or advantage from so great an expenditure of money, and after so much preliminary swagger on the part, not of the people who were to pay or the soldiers who were to fight, but of the statesmen who had already begun to blunder."*

<sup>14</sup> *The Political Life of Viscount Barrington*; Section viii.

## CHAPTER VII

### WASHINGTON

*The Battle for New York, the retreat across the Jerseys, Trenton and Princeton reveal that the second campaign of the British to subdue the rebellious colonies is little more successful than the first. Out of it emerged a military commander whose reputation would soon be worldwide.*

SIR WILLIAM HOWE, for the time being, had lost his hold on the mainland of America; and his second campaign, like his first, had gone to water. The most important results, however, of Trenton and Princeton were not of a local or a temporary character. The permanent and paramount consequence of those masterly operations was the establishment of Washington's military reputation, and the increased weight of his political and administrative authority throughout every State of the Confederacy, and up to the very latest hour of the war. A commander, patient and intrepid in adversity, and silent under calumny,—who never attempts to gloss over his reverses, or to explain away his mistakes,—reaps the reward of his honesty and self-control tenfold, and a hundredfold, when, out of a cloud of gloom and peril, success at length comes. No one then questions the truth as he tells it in his despatches; men are inclined to over-rate, rather than to depreciate and to decry, the advantages he has gained; and few grudge the full credit of victory to a general who has always accepted the entire responsibility for failure. The withdrawal of Sir William Howe from his advanced positions in New Jersey proved to be, in the case of Washington, what the retreat of Massena from before the lines of Torres Vedras was in relation to the personal fortunes, and the public usefulness, of Wellington. Any more exact parallel in the story of two exalted careers it would be difficult to name. From Trenton onwards, Washington was recognised as a far-sighted and skilful general all Europe over,—by the great military nobles in the Empress Catherine's court, by French Marshals and Ministers, in the King's cabinet at



Potsdam, at Madrid, at Vienna, and in London. He had shown himself, (said Horace Walpole,) both a Fabius and a Camillus; and his march through the British lines was allowed to be a prodigy of leadership.<sup>1</sup> That was the talk in England; and the Englishman who, of all others, most warmly appreciated Washington's strategy in New Jersey during that fortnight of midwinter was one who had had the very best opportunity for judging of it. After the capitulation at Yorktown, in October 1781, a dinner was given at the American head-quarters to the principal officers in the British, the French, and the Continental armies. Cornwallis,—exaggerating to himself, it may be, the obligations of old-fashioned courtesy and chivalry,—took his seat at the board, and responded thus to a toast which Washington had proposed. "When the illustrious part that your Excellency has borne in this long and arduous contest becomes matter of history, fame will gather your brightest laurels rather from the banks of the Delaware than from those of the Chesapeake." At that moment, and before that audience, Washington's generalship in the Chesapeake campaign must have represented an exceptionally high standard of comparison.

In such estimation was Washington held by foreigners, whether they were declared enemies, or benevolent neutrals, or potential and probable allies; and he thenceforward had all his own countrymen for admirers, except those very few who did not as yet altogether renounce the ambition of being popularly regarded as his rivals. The enhanced influence which he derived from prosperity came at the precise conjuncture when that influence could be utilised with the greatest possible effect. On the twentieth of December he had addressed to the President of Congress a long and earnest exposition of the evils arising from the plan of short enlistments in the Continental armies; from a low average of professional capacity in the commissioned ranks; from the weakness of the artillery, and the entire absence of cavalry and of scientific officers. Congress, in reply, invested him with "full, ample, and complete powers" to raise sixteen additional battalions of infantry, three thousand light-horse, three regiments of artillery, and a corps of engineers; to call upon any of the States for such aid of the militia as he should deem necessary; to displace and appoint all officers beneath the rank of Brigadier; to take, at a fair price, all supplies of provisions, or articles of equipment, which he might require for the use of the army; and to arrest, confine, and send for trial in the Civil Courts, any persons whatsoever who were disaffected to the American cause. This dictatorship,—for it was nothing less,—was extended over

<sup>1</sup> Walpole to Mann; Strawberry Hill, April 3, 1777.

the old Roman period of six months; and Congress specifically announced that the step was taken in perfect reliance on the wisdom, the vigour, and the uprightness of General Washington. It was handsomely worded; but the force of the compliment lay not so much in the phrasing, as in the timing, of the Resolution. Although a final decision was not taken until the day after Trenton, Washington's letter had been read and considered, and a committee had been appointed to prepare an answer, before the issue of that battle was known in Baltimore. Such an expression of confidence, unstintedly and unanimously accorded during the closing hours of the very darkest season in American history, will remain on record through all ages as a tribute to the man, and not to his fortune.

That fortune had now turned. After a year and a half's intense and continual study of Sir William Howe, Washington had read his character, and understood his ways. Divining with certainty that the British general would leave him in peace during the rest of the winter and well forward into the spring, he set himself calmly to the task of reinforcing and remaking the Continental army. Congress, acting on his advice, had sanctioned the enlistment of soldiers for a term of three years, or for the duration of the war; and the sixteen new battalions were to be formed of men taken indiscriminately from all or any of the States. The last provision was much to the mind of Washington, who, (to use his own language,) had laboured to discourage all kinds of local attachments and distinctions throughout the army, "denominating the whole by the greater name of American."<sup>2</sup> That sentiment, in the early days of the Revolution, was not congenial to the national tastes and temperament. In the view of a New Englander, or a Pennsylvanian, the ideal regiment was a provincial corps where he was at home among friends and neighbours; where discipline was loose, and furloughs might be had for the asking, or even for the taking; and where the period of service was terminable within the twelve-month. Previously to Trenton it would have been impossible to exact the strict conditions indispensable for the solidity of a regular army; but the name of Washington was now endowed with a power to inspire and attract his younger fellow-countrymen; and he succeeded in engaging a considerable supply, although not a sufficiency, of recruits who bound themselves to see the war through. If they came in slowly, they came steadily; and those who presented themselves were for the most part well worth retaining.

<sup>2</sup> Washington to the President of Congress; Camp above Trenton Falls, December 20, 1776.

Washington still had plenty of room in his ranks for privates; but the case was otherwise with regard to his officers. The muster-rolls showed a superfluity of captains and lieutenants, and a veritable glut of colonels. There were good and bad among them; but their individual worth had been severely and decisively tested on Long Island and at White Plains, in the Jersey retreat, and amid the hardships of the Canadian expedition.<sup>3</sup> Washington had an intimate personal acquaintance with those brigades which he had led in battle; he knew for himself whether an officer sought, or shunned, work and danger; and he spared no pains to ascertain the merits and defects of those who had served in distant parts of the Continent under other generals. Absolute trust was reposed in his justice and impartiality; his authority no one ventured to dispute; and there seldom, or never, has been a fairer opportunity for the exercise of that unflinching and enlightened selection which is the keystone of warlike efficiency. The labour of reorganisation was carried forward under dire pressure; but it was not scamped or hurried. Before the end of the ensuing summer a very censorious critic was at his post of observation when the American Commander-in-Chief marched down the main street of Philadelphia at the head of nine or ten thousand of his troops. Though indifferently dressed, (so this witness remarked,) they held well-burnished arms, and carried them like soldiers; and they looked as if they might have faced an equal number of their redoubtable adversaries with a reasonable prospect of success.<sup>4</sup> That opinion was justified, in the five years which were to come, by a long series of battles honourably lost, or arduously won. The military force which Washington brought into shape at Morristown,—waxing or waning in numbers, but constantly improving in quality,—followed him obediently, resolutely, and devotedly as long as their country had occasion for a general and an army.

<sup>3</sup> The *American Archives* contain a curious report to the New York Convention, made at the close of 1776 by a committee appointed for the purpose of revising the list of officers in the State Contingent. The work was done conscientiously and rigidly; and some of the entries are in remarkably plain and unvarnished English. "Not so careful and attentive as could be wished." "A sober officer, but rather too old." "Too heavy and inactive for an officer." "Too heavy and illiterate for an officer." "Of too rough a make for an officer; better qualified for the Navy than the Army." "A very low-lived fellow." "A good officer, but of a sickly constitution, and had better quit the service." "Wanting in authority to make a good officer. He has deceived the Convention by enlisting the men for six and nine months, instead of during the war." "These three lieutenants wish to decline the service. They will be no loss to it." Many of the names are noted as excellent, creditable, and promising; but it is evident that there had been little time to pick and choose among the candidates for commissions during the stress and hurry which accompanied the outbreak of hostilities.

<sup>4</sup> *Pennsylvanian Memoirs*; chapter xii.

## CHAPTER VIII

### FEARS FOR ENGLISH LIBERTY. THE NEWSPAPERS. NORTH AND SOUTH BRITAIN

THE events, which took place during those stirring months in the regions watered by the Delaware and Hudson rivers, form a plain and straightforward narrative; but the story of what was passing in England is more complicated, and far more difficult to tell. For that was no affair of marches and counter-marches, of skirmishes, and panics, and surprise. The conflict there was in the senate, the market-place, and the newspaper; in the interior of every household, and within the breast of every thinking citizen. Before the year 1777 was six weeks old it became plain that the hour had arrived when it was incumbent upon all men to form an opinion of their own, to profess it frankly, and to abide by it courageously. Up to this time many had concerned themselves but little with the rights and wrongs of the quarrel, or with the expediency of an appeal to arms. The Government, which was supposed to know, had proclaimed that the colonists were contemptible as antagonists, that the war would be short and cheap, and that the cost of it would very soon be covered, several times over, by the produce of taxes which Americans would never again refuse to pay when once they had been well beaten; and quiet people, who liked being governed, had believed the Government. Some, indeed, among the Peers and members of Parliament who supported the Cabinet had long ago admitted to each other, in whispers and sealed letters, that they had begun to be desperately uneasy. "Administration," (wrote Lord Carlisle to George Selwyn as early as the winter of 1775,) "is in a great scrape. Their measures never can succeed. We, who have voted for them, have a right to complain; for they have deceived us, and, I suppose, themselves."<sup>1</sup> The same disheartening conviction was now

<sup>1</sup> *George Selwyn and his Contemporaries*; Vol. III., page 114, of the Edition of 1844.



brought home to every private individual who could spare five minutes a day to the consideration of public affairs. After eight years of military occupation, and twenty-one months of very hard fighting, America was far from being conquered, and farther yet from being convinced that her interest lay in submission to the demands of the British Parliament.

The situation was clearly understood, and temperately but unanswerably exposed, by discerning onlookers in either country. An American Whig, at the very moment when the prospects of his own cause were darkest, made a cool and careful estimate of the English chances. "Their whole hope of success," he said, "depends upon frequent and decisive victories, gained before our army is disciplined. The expense of feeding and paying great fleets and armies, at such a distance, is too enormous for any nation on earth to bear for a great while. It is said that ninety thousand tons of shipping are employed in their service constantly, at thirteen shillings and four pence a ton per month. When our soldiers are enlisted for the war, discipline must daily increase. Our army can be recruited after a defeat, while our enemies must cross the Atlantic to repair a misfortune. Have we felt a tenth part of the hardships the States of Holland suffered at the hands of Spain; or does our case look half so difficult? States are not conquered by victories. After a succession of splendid victories obtained over France by the Duke of Marlborough, in each of which more men were slain than in the whole of this war, still that kingdom made a formidable resistance, and obtained an honourable peace."<sup>2</sup>

That was written in December 1776, when all the victories which hitherto marked the campaign had been scored by the British. After Trenton and Princeton were fought, and Howe had retired from the Jerseys, the same views were yet more powerfully enforced by a Londoner. "The small scale of our maps deceived us; and, as the word 'America' takes up no more room than the word 'Yorkshire,' we seem to think the territories they represent are much of the same bigness; though Charleston is as far from Boston as London from Venice. Braddock might tell the difficulties of this loose, rugged country, were he living. Amherst might still do it. Yet these officers found a willing people to help them, and General Howe finds nothing willing. We have undertaken a war against farmers and farmhouses, scattered through a wild waste of continent, and shall soon hear of our General being obliged to garrison woods, to scale mountains, to wait for boats and pontoons at rivers, and to have his convoys and escorts as large

<sup>2</sup> American newspaper article of December 24, 1776; signed "Perseverance."

as armies. These, and a thousand such difficulties, will rise on us at the next stage of the war. I say the next stage, because we have hitherto spent one campaign, and some millions, in losing one landing-place at Boston; and, at the charge of seven millions and a second campaign, we have replaced it with two other landing-places at Rhode Island and New York. I am entirely of opinion with Voltaire that every great conquerer must be a great politician. Something more is required, than the mere mechanical business of fighting, in composing revolts and bringing back things to their former order.”<sup>3</sup>

The keenest eye in Europe already foresaw the inevitable issue. Frederic of Prussia had won and lost many battles, and had learned not to over-rate the importance of any single defeat or victory. He had followed Washington, through the vicissitudes of the protracted struggle, with the insight and sympathy of one who himself had striven against fearful odds; who had committed grievous mistakes, and had profited by his lesson; and who had at length emerged, secure and successful, from a flood of war in which both friends and enemies, for years together, felt assured that nothing could save him from being overwhelmed. With such an experience he did not need to wait for Saratoga and Yorktown in order to be convinced that Great Britain had involved herself in a hopeless task. All the information which he had received, (so he wrote in the first half of March 1777,) went to show that the colonies would attain, and keep, their independence.<sup>4</sup> That was how the future was regarded by the greatest warrior of the age; and the facts of the case, as he knew them, were the property of all the world. Civilians, who had never seen a cannon fired, but who could use their common sense, had plenty of material on which to build an estimate of the military probabilities. Abundant and most discouraging intelligence appeared in private letters from officers in America, which were freely published in the English journals; and even those who took in the “London Gazette,” and no other newspaper, might find very serious matter for reflection as they read between the lines of Sir William Howe’s despatches.

There was, however, an aspect of the question which occupied and concerned our ancestors far more deeply than any purely military considerations. It must never be forgotten that many Englishmen from the first,—and in the end a decided, and indeed a very large, majority among them,—regarded the contest which was being fought out

<sup>3</sup> Letter from London of February 1777.

<sup>4</sup> Le Roi Frédéric au Comte de Maltzan; Potsdam, 13 mars, 1777.

in America not as a foreign war, but as a civil war in which English liberty was the stake. They held that a policy had been deliberately initiated, and during half a generation had been resolutely pursued, of which the avowed object was to make the Royal power dominant in the State; and the historians in highest repute, who since have treated of those times, unreservedly maintain the same view. That policy had now prevailed; and Personal Government, from a mischievous theory, had grown into a portentous reality. The victory of the Crown had been preceded by an epoch of continuous and bitter strife, every stage in which was marked by deplorable incidents. The publication through the press of opinions obnoxious to the Court had been punished with unsparing severity. The right of constituents to elect a person of their choice had been denied in words, and repeatedly violated in practice. The benches of the Lords and the Commons swarmed with an ever increasing band of placemen and pensioners subsidised by the King; and these gentlemen well knew the work which their paymaster expected of them. Their vocation was to harass any minister who conceived that he owed a duty to the people as well as to the Sovereign; and to betray and ruin him if he proved incorrigible in his notions of patriotism. The most famous English statesmen,—all, it is not too much to say, who are now remembered with pride by Englishmen of every party,—were shut out from the opportunity, and even from the hope, of office; and our national qualities of manliness and independence had come to be a standing disqualification for employment in the nation's service. At last the Cabinet had picked a quarrel with the colonies over the very same question which convulsed England in the days of Strafford and the ship-money. In order to vindicate the doctrine that taxation might be imposed without representation, the servants of the Crown, or rather its bondsmen, (for the Prime Minister, and the most respectable of his colleagues, were in this matter acting under compulsion, and against their consciences,) had undertaken to coerce the communities in America with fire and sword, and to visit individuals with the extreme penalties of rebellion. It followed, as a natural and certain consequence, that the party, which resented the encroachments of the Crown at home, sincerely and universally entertained a belief which influenced their whole view of the colonial controversy. That belief had been placed on record, in quiet but expressive language, by a nobleman who, in his honoured age, lived among us as the last of the old Whigs. Lord Albemarle distinctly states that in 1774, and for some years afterwards, the Opposition were

possessed by "a deep and well-grounded conviction that, if despotism were once established in America, arbitrary government would at least be attempted in the mother-country."<sup>5</sup>

Those apprehensions were shared by men whose judgment cannot lightly be set aside, and the strength of whose patriotism was many degrees above proof. Chatham, when he spoke in public, dwelt mainly upon the rights of the colonists, the duty of England, and the appalling military dangers which would result to the Empire if those rights were invaded and that duty ignored. With the instinct of a great orator, he did not willingly introduce fresh debateable matter into a controversy where he had so many sufficient and self-evident arguments ready to his hand; but his private correspondence clearly indicates that the keenness of his emotion, and the warmth of his advocacy, were closely connected with a profound belief that, if America were subjugated, Britain would not long be free. Would to Heaven, (he wrote,) that England was not doomed to bind round her own hands, and wear patiently, the chains which she was forging for her colonies! And then he quoted, with telling effect, the passage in which Juvenal described how the spread of servility among the Roman people, and the corruption of their public spirit, avenged the wrongs of the subject world upon the conquerors themselves.<sup>6</sup>

The fears which Chatham acknowledged were confessed likewise by the only man, then alive, whose authority stands on a level with his own. In the early spring of 1777 Burke affirmed that the American war had done more in a very few years, than all other causes could have done in a century, to prepare the minds of the English people for the introduction of arbitrary government. The successive steps of the process, by which that result was being brought about, are set forth in the last five paragraphs of the Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol with the fullness and exactness of a political philosopher, and the incisive vigour of a practical statesman. Those paragraphs, indeed, are too long to quote; and it would be a literary crime to abridge or to paraphrase them; but the conclusions at which Burke had arrived are more briefly and roughly stated in a couple of sentences wherein he thus commented on the American rebellion. "We cannot," he wrote, "amidst the excesses and abuses which have happened, help respecting

<sup>5</sup> Those words are found in the tenth chapter of the second volume of *Lord Rockingham's Memoirs*. Lord Albemarle, who had played trap-ball with Charles Fox, lived to hold an extemporised levée of London society on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the day when he carried the colours on to the field of Waterloo.

<sup>6</sup> The Earl of Chatham to Mr. Sheriff Sayre; Hayes, August 28, 1774.



the spirit and principles operating in these commotions. Those principles bear so close a resemblance to those which support the most valuable part of our constitution, that we cannot think of extirpating them in any part of His Majesty's dominions without admitting consequences, and establishing precedents, the most dangerous to the liberties of this kingdom."<sup>7</sup>

Horace Walpole, with whom the chief men of both parties freely conversed, had no doubt whither the road led which the stronger, and the worse, members of the Cabinet joyfully followed; and down which the less perverse, and the more timid, were irresistibly driven. He never was easy about the political future of his country, until North's Government fell, and the danger disappeared. During the winter when Howe and Washington were contending the Jerseys, Walpole complained that his life at present consisted in being wished joy over the defeat and slaughter of fellow-countrymen, who were fighting for his liberty as well as for their own. Thirty months afterwards he spoke still more gloomily. It was bad enough, (he said,) to be at war with France and Spain because we would not be content to let America send us half the wealth of the world in her own way, instead of in the way that pleased George Grenville and Charles Townshend. But the subversion of a happy Constitution, by the hands of domestic enemies, was a worse fate than any which we could suffer from the foreigner; and that fate, unless the nation recovered its senses, only too surely awaited us. Walpole emphatically declared that the freedom of England had become endangered, and her glory began to decline, from the moment that she "ran wild after a phantasm of absolute power" over colonies whose liberty was the source of her own greatness.<sup>8</sup>

It was an ominous circumstance that the Jacobites and the Non-jurors were open-mouthed against America, and, one and all, were ardent supporters of the war. The members of that party, which professed the doctrine of passive obedience, had transferred their allegiance to George the Third, honestly and undisguisedly, from the moment that he made manifest his intention to select his own ministers and govern for himself. They stood by the Court, (as readers of Junius

<sup>7</sup> The manuscript, which is in Mr. Burke's handwriting, is thus docketed by the fourth Earl Fitzwilliam: "Probably this was intended as an amendment to the Address to be moved after the campaign of 1776." In that case, the paper must have been drafted at the precise point of time which this narrative has now reached.

<sup>8</sup> Walpole to the Countess of Ossory, Jan. 26, 1777. Walpole to Sir Horace Mann, June 16, 1779; and to the Countess of Ossory, June 22, 1779.

are aware,) throughout every turn of the conflict which raged around the Middlesex Election. They were frequently taunted, in very good prose and extremely poor verse, with having deserted the shrine of their ancient loyalty; but the course of action which they adopted was to the credit of their common-sense and their consistency. The Jacobites of 1775 were not dreamers, nor dilettantes. Only half a life-time before that date they had been formidable enough to shake the State to the very foundation; and, now that they had suited themselves to their altered circumstances, they were a redoubtable party again. Men who had been Jacobites in their youth, and who were the friends of arbitrary government still, constituted a strong minority in the Corporations of some towns, and a majority among the Justices of the Peace on not a few Petty Sessional benches in the northern counties. They did not amuse themselves with a ritual of wreaths and rosettes, or trouble themselves about the Christian name of the monarch whose health they drank. Their creed was a serious and genuine devotion to the principles in accord with which they thought that the country ought to be administered. If they could not have a Stuart, they were willing to accept a Hanoverian who pursued the Stuart policy; and they were quite ready to put their money on the White Horse, so long as he galloped in what they conceived to be the right direction. When once the American war broke out, it became evident to them that there were no lengths to which the King was not prepared to go: and there were most certainly none to which they themselves would not eagerly follow.<sup>9</sup> Testimony to that effect was given by a witness who knew, as well as anybody, what the Jacobites were thinking. In one of the last letters which he wrote, David Hume, with the solemnity of a dying man, prophesied that, if the Court carried the day in America, the English Constitution would infallibly perish.<sup>10</sup>

Historians, who understand their business, when seeking to ascertain the trend of national opinion at any crisis in our history, have

<sup>9</sup> "The Scots address and fight now with as much zeal in the cause of the House of Brunswick as they did, during the last reigns, in that of the House of Stuart. This proves that it is not the name, but the cause, for which they fight. The Scots are in hopes that extinguishing the very name of English liberty in America will secure the destruction of the constitution in old England. In the present auspicious reign they think themselves nearer the completion of their wishes, and are therefore more insolent, and more ardent, in the pursuit." Extract from the *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* of 1776.

<sup>10</sup> *Histoire de l'Action Commune de la France et de l'Amérique pour l'Indépendance des États-Unis*, par George Bancroft: Tome III., page 200. The Paris version of this work is described as "Traduit et annoté par le Comte Adolphe de Circourt; accompagné de Documents Inédits."

always laid stress upon the confidential reports of foreign emissaries accredited to St. James's, and on the conclusions which were borne in upon the mind of the Ruler to whom those reports were addressed. Our knowledge of English feeling, during the years that preceded our own Great Revolution, is largely derived from the secret correspondence of the French Ambassador at the Court of James the Second; and, in like manner, the correspondence of the Prussian Minister in London, at the time of the Declaration of Independence, throws an important light upon British politics. Indeed, of the two diplomatists, Frederic the Great's envoy is the safer guide. The Count de Maltzan was better qualified to distinguish between material facts, and party gossip, than de Barillon, who habitually dabbled in political intrigues at Westminster; and Frederic, in a very different degree from Louis the Fourteenth, was an employer to whom it was much less safe to tell a doctored and flattering tale than a disagreeable truth.

Frederic had observed every turn of the constitutional struggle in England as closely as he watched the variation in numbers of the Austrian or Russian armies, and with as good cause; and he now was firmly persuaded that the fears of Burke and Chatham with regard to the precarious condition of our public liberty were not exaggerated. It might have been supposed that the prospect would have left him indifferent; for assuredly he had no desire to set up a Parliamentary opposition at Berlin, or convert his own Kingdom into a limited monarchy. But he was in the habit of looking to results; and, in his eyes, the suitable form of government for any country was that, and only that, which produced strong and capable administration. The England, which Frederic the Great desired to see, was an England taking a continuous and intelligent interest in Continental movements; commanding the esteem and confidence of her neighbours; and able, with all her enormous resources well in hand, to make her influence decisively felt. But, under her then rulers, our country was a cipher in Europe; distracted by internal dissension, and spending in a foolish quarrel with her own colonies the strength which had so recently made her the arbitress of the world, and which,—at the rate that she was lavishing men, money, and reputation,—might soon be hardly sufficient for the protection of her own coasts and arsenals.

Frederic, moreover, had a special grudge of his own against the system of government which had of late been inaugurated in England. That nation, under the inspiration of Lord Chatham,—the statesman who now was the prime assertor of its imperilled liberties,—had

fought the earlier campaigns of the Seven Years' War side by side with Prussia, and had helped her, in her dire extremity, with a supply of British gold which was only less welcome than the assistance of the British sword. But when George the Third ascended the throne, and as soon as he could get a minister to his mind, he tore up that glorious treaty of alliance; stopped the payment of a subsidy which to the English Treasury was a pittance, but which seemed a mountain of wealth to the thrifty Prussian War Office; and, in the hottest moment of the chase, threw Frederic over to the wolves. Those wolves, in the end, found him a tough morsel; but he never even pretended to forget that the first overt act of Personal Government in England had been to play him a trick which came very near to be his ruin. Detestation of Lord Bute, and of Lord Bute's Royal patron, and a very genuine love and admiration for Chatham, rendered the Prussian King an earnest and far-seeing friend of British constitutional freedom. If the nation, (such was the tenor of his predictions,) allowed the Sovereign to act according to his good pleasure, and abandoned the colonies to the lot which he destined for them, that lot would sooner or later be shared by England; for the policy of George the Third was the same everywhere, and he was pursuing despotic courses in all portions of his dominions. "It appears," Frederic wrote, "from all I hear, that the ancient British spirit has almost entirely eclipsed itself, and that everything tends to a change in the form of government, so that the old constitution will exist only in the surface, and the nation in effect will be nearer slavery than in any preceding reign."<sup>11</sup>

Those were strong words from a ruler who was an autocrat, and who fully purposed to remain one; but the danger which threatened English liberty aroused uneasiness in a still more singular quarter than the Royal cabinet at Potsdam. Frederic, after all, was at peace with our country, although it did not break his heart to find her in a scrape; whereas France was an active, and ere long an open, enemy. The French Government, sore from recent losses and humiliations, greeted with delight the rebellion of our colonists; supplied them almost from the first with money and military stores; seized the opportunity of our difficulty to declare hostilities, which were prosecuted with what, for the French, was unwonted, and even unexampled, energy; and laboured to unite Europe in a coalition against the British Empire. And yet there were Frenchmen, and many Frenchmen, who never ceased

<sup>11</sup> Le Roi Frédéric au Comte de Maltzan, 14 août, 1775, (en chiffres;) 18 décembre, 1775; 26 juin, 1777.



to reverence England as a country which held up to the contemplation of mankind an example of the material and moral advantages arising from stable and rational self-government; and which, for more than two centuries, had been a champion of liberty outside her own borders. Their prayer, or, (more strictly speaking,) their hope and aspiration,—for advanced thinkers in France were not much given to praying,—was that England might cease to be forgetful of her high mission, and might bethink herself, before it grew too late, that in destroying the freedom of others she was striking at her own.

These ideas are reflected in letters addressed to Lord Shelburne by the Abbé Morellet when war between France and England was already imminent; and a later part of the same correspondence proves that, after four years of fierce and dubious fighting, solicitude for the honour of our country had not been extinguished in the hearts of some generous enemies. The fall of Lord North in 1782 was hailed by enlightened Parisians with a satisfaction inspired by the most laudable motives. They felt joy and relief because there would be an end of bloodshed; because the highest civilisation, of which France and England were the chief repositories, would no longer be divided against itself; but above and beyond all, because liberty would henceforward be secure in the one great country of Europe which was constitutionally governed. "Yes, my Lord," cried Morellet, "in spite of the war that divides us, I am glad to see your country better administered. I rejoice, in my quality of citizen of the world, that a great people should resume their true place; should regain a clear view of their real interests; and should employ their resources, not in the pursuit of an end which cannot be attained, but for the conservation of that wealth and influence which are naturally their due, and which, for the sake of the world at large, it is all-important that they should continue to possess. If the independence of America had perished, your constitution would have been overthrown, and your freedom lost."<sup>12</sup>

Among foreigners who vexed themselves about the perils which overhung the British Constitution the Whigs in America could no

<sup>12</sup> *Lettres de l'Abbé Morellet, de l'Académie Française, à Lord Shelburne, depuis Marquis de Lansdowne, 1772-1803*, avec Introduction et Notes par Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice: Paris, 1898; pages 110, 189, 191. The passage in the text reproduces the substance of Morellet's letter of April 1782, and some of the words; for the words are many. Morellet was a decorative artist of a high order; an adept in dressing up the stern discoveries of British political economists in a shape to suit the French taste. When, as in the case before us, he lighted upon a subject which admitted of sentiment and emotion, he was not sparing of his ornament.

longer be reckoned. As the war went forward, and their sacrifices and sufferings increased, the colonists, (and none could fairly blame them,) took less and less count of the distinction between the two political parties at Westminster. They regarded Britain as one integral and formidable whole; and the character in which she presented herself at their doors was not such as to command their sympathy. Charles Fox, and his eloquent and statesmanlike speeches, were a long way off; while General Burgoyne, with his Brunswickers and his Red Indians, was very near indeed. People who were occupied in striving to repel British armies, and in rebuilding towns which British fleets had burned, were left with very little leisure to interest themselves about the preservation of British liberties. But their descendants, who had plenty of time to think the matter over,—and who, indeed, in the department of history, for many years to come thought of very little else,—have gradually arrived at the conclusion that, if the resistance of the colonies had been overpowered, British and Transatlantic freedom would have perished together. That conclusion is, now and again, set forth by living American writers in a tone of just pride, and in language worthy of the theme. Whatever, (we are told,) may be the spirit of the people of the United States to-day, in the eighteenth century the people of the colonies were English to the heart's core. Ever since the new reign began, they had noticed, with growing anxiety, the determination of George the Third to undermine and overthrow the old English structure of genuine national self-government, and real ministerial responsibility. The Englishmen in America rebelled the first, because they were the first to feel the full force of the assault upon liberty. Their Revolution was not an uprising against England, or the English people, or the English Constitution. It was a defensive movement, undertaken in behalf of essential English institutions, against the purpose and effort of a monarch to defeat the political progress of the race, and to turn back the hands of time so that they might mark again the dreary hour before Parliament had delivered us from the Stuarts.<sup>13</sup>

Such, in the deliberate judgement of a succeeding generation, was the aspect of the situation in England during the earlier years of the American war; and such it then seemed to Frenchmen who watched our politics from the safe side of the Channel. It was an aspect necessarily most alarming to contemporary Englishmen who foresaw that

<sup>13</sup> Article by Henry Loomis Nelson, in the *New York Journal Literature* of March 31, 1899.

the free institutions of their own country might ere long be exposed to a final and successful assault; and who were conscious of being too high-spirited and stout-hearted to shrink, when the day of trial came, from doing their utmost in defence of freedom, however ruinous might be the penalty to themselves and their families. Those anticipations saddened their lives, inspired their public action, and coloured their written and spoken confidences. The Duke of Richmond was a senator of long experience, a man of the world, and a great peer with an enormous stake in the country; his private letters are serious documents of grave authority; and those letters supply posterity with a sample of what was thought and feared by many thousands of humbler, but not less honest and patriotic, people.

In August 1776,—on the day, as it happened, that Howe began to move against the American lines in Long Island,—Richmond wrote to Edmund Burke at great length from Paris. The Duke had repaired to France, for the purpose of looking after his hereditary estate in that country, and of making good his claim to the Dukedom of Aubigny. That proved a burdensome undertaking; for the grant of a peerage, in order to be valid, required to be registered by the Parliament of Paris; and, in the Parliament of Paris, nothing was to be had for nothing. Richmond complained that, “besides the real business itself, the visits, formalities, solicitations, dinners, suppers,” and all the rest of the machinery for bringing influence to bear upon every individual concerned, were infinitely wearisome and costly. And yet all the expense of time, trouble, and money was in his estimation, very well laid out; because, although things were ill managed in France, circumstances might arise when it would be impossible for him to reside at his English home. “Who knows,” wrote Richmond, “that a time may not come when a retreat to this country may not be a happy thing to have? We now hold our liberties merely by the magnanimity of the best of kings, who will not make use of the opportunity he has to seize them; for he has it in his power, with the greatest ease and quiet, to imitate the King of Sweden.<sup>14</sup> I have not the least doubt but that his faithful peers and commons would by degrees,—or at once if he liked it better,—vote him complete despotism. I fear I see the time approaching when the English, after having been guilty of every kind of meanness and corruption, will at last own themselves, like the Swedes, unworthy to

<sup>14</sup> Gustavus the Third had recently subverted the Constitution in Sweden; not without excuses which were altogether wanting to George the Third when he devised his scheme of Personal Government.

be free. When that day comes, our situation will be worse than France. Young despotism, like a boy broke loose from school, will indulge itself in every excess. Besides, if there is a contest, though it be a feeble one, I, or mine, may be among the proscribed. If such an event should happen, and America not be open to receive us, France is some retreat, and a peerage here is something.”<sup>15</sup>

British opinion was never unanimous at any stage of the American war; but in what proportion that opinion was divided it is impossible to determine at the distance of a hundred and thirty years. Men of practical experience in politics turn sceptical when told very positively what “the country” thinks with regard to a question even of their own day, and are inclined to ask their informant how large a part of the country has taken him into its confidence. Historians, who have tried to gauge the feeling of our ancestors during the struggle with America, have often paid far too much respect to the hasty generalisations of sanguine, or despondent, partisans. All those who sturdily push their way through the thickets of that ancient controversy find such fruit growing in profusion on every bush. A Whig in Devonshire wrote out to Philadelphia that the whole nation was mad, and that he could scarcely meet one man in twenty who did not wish to see Great Britain, and himself, bankrupt rather than not bring the colonies to the feet of Lord George Germaine. John Wesley, on the other hand, while heartily agreeing that the nation was mad, gave as a proof of it that a great majority of Englishmen, Irishmen, and Scotchmen were exasperated almost to insanity against the King and the King’s policy. Anything may be proved on either side by a judicious selection of individual utterances that were made in all good faith, but too frequently from very imperfect knowledge. More profitable results are to be obtained by minute observation of certain facts and circumstances which are beyond dispute; and the significance of which can be tested by those who, whenever the England of their own lifetime has passed through a period of warlike excitement, have kept their eyes open to what went on around them. Twice in the memory of men over sixty years of age, and once at least in the experience of everyone who reads these volumes, Britain has been engaged in a war on which the interest of the nation was eagerly concentrated. All who have noted the features and incidents of the Crimean war, and the Transvaal war,—and who have studied the parallel features and incidents of the years which

<sup>15</sup> The Duke of Richmond to Edmund Burke, Esq.; Paris, August 26, 1776.



elapsed between 1774 and 1782,—may estimate for themselves whether the American war, as wars go, was popular or not.

Before commencing that inquiry, there is one preliminary remark which, on the face of the matter, it is permissible to make. The House of Commons, at the last, with the warm and very general approbation of the country, put a stop to hostilities, and recognised the independence of America. The British nation had been tried in the fire before then, and has been tried since; and it has never been the national custom to back out of a just quarrel for no other reason than because Britain, at a given moment, was getting the worst of it. In 1782 our people solemnly and deliberately abandoned the attempt to reconquer America on the ground that it was both wrong and foolish; and that fact, to the mind of everyone who holds the British character in esteem, affords an irresistible proof that a very large section of the people must all along have been fully persuaded that the coercion of our colonists by arms was neither wise nor righteous.

The surest criterion of the popularity attaching to a warlike policy is afforded by the prevailing tone and tendency of the public journals. So long as a people have their hearts in a contest, newspapers which oppose the war are few, and for the most part, timid; while the newspapers which support the war are numerous and thriving, and very seldom err by an excess of tolerance when dealing either with critics at home, or with adversaries abroad. Books or pamphlets, however large their number, do not supply an equally important test of national opinions. On the one hand, it is notorious that Ministers of State in the eighteenth century were in the habit of paying an author to defend them and their proceedings; and, on the other hand, a man who, from public spirit or private spite, is opposed to a Government, thinks little of spending ten or twenty pounds in order that his fellow-citizens should be able to peruse his views in print, however few among them may care to avail themselves of the opportunity. But a newspaper lives by being read; and, in the great majority of cases, none read it, and still fewer buy it, unless they agree with its opinions. The first quarter of a century in George the Third's reign was to a marked degree an age of newspapers. Whatever good or evil the King might have done, he had lent, most unintentionally, an extraordinary impulse to the activity and influence of public journalism. During the long constitutional agitation, of which the Middlesex Election was the outward and visible symptom, newspapers had played a commanding part. They had multiplied in number; they had grown in size; they had perfected

themselves in the art of producing matter acceptable to their readers; and they had greatly increased their circulation. Between 1760 and 1775 the stamps issued by the Treasury had risen, from less than nine and a half, to considerably over twelve and a half, millions a year. In 1776,—after some experience of a war conducted beneath the eyes of a vigilant press,—the Cabinet, needing money much and loving newspapers but little, raised the stamp duty to the amount of three halfpence on every half sheet. Still the sale went upwards; and it was not until Lord North retired from office, and the long argument between the Crown and the people was thereby concluded, that the growing demand for newspaper stamps began to flag, and at length actually fell.

Among London newspapers the largest, the most attractive, and quite incomparably the most in request, were opposed to the American policy of the Cabinet. The “North Briton,” indeed, was no longer in existence. Number Forty-five, the dearest scrap of printed matter on record,—for it cost the Government, soon or late, a hundred thousand pounds to suppress it,—had been burned by the common hangman amid public excitement so vehement that the hangman himself was with difficulty saved from being burned as well. But a whole covey of Phœnixes rose from its ashes, eager to avenge their defunct predecessor with beak and talon. The London “Evening Post,” the “Public Advertiser,” the “Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser,” and the “Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser,” gave the Court and the Bedfords superabundant cause to regret that they had not left Wilkes and his newspaper alone.

Most of the leading journals, mindful of their origin, were careful to insert the time-honoured name of “Advertiser” in some corner of their title. They had commenced existence as advertising sheets, containing little news and less politics.<sup>16</sup> But it was far otherwise with the imposing pages which, on every other morning during every week that the American war lasted, came rustling forth from the London presses. They did not altogether disdain to inform the world where purchasers might hear of desirable house-property, and seasoned hunters, and drafts of fox-hound puppies, and pectoral lozenges for defluxions, and Analeptic Pills for gout, and Catholic Pills for everything; but they devoted very much the larger part of their ample space to more flaming and fascinating topics. Their varied columns teemed with news which could not be found in the “London Gazette,” and which the Ministry had frequently the strongest personal reasons for concealing.

<sup>16</sup> Chapter vii. of *English Newspapers*, by H. R. Fox-Bourne; London, 1897.

In communicated articles; in spicy paragraphs; in epistles of inordinate length, signed by old Roman names of the Republican era,—they flagellated the Prime Minister and every one of his colleagues, and denounced him for having begun an unjust war which he was totally incompetent to conduct.

The "Morning Post and Daily Advertiser" had been converted into a ministerial paper by Henry Bate, the editor. Bate was a clergyman by profession, and was reasonably enough viewed in Whig circles as one who did not rise to the obligations of his sacred calling; for very eminent Tories, in his own day and afterwards, have admitted that at this period of his career he was nothing better than a bully and a ruffian. Dr. Johnson, who fought for his Sovereign's policy strenuously, and even fiercely, but who always fought fair, spoke of Bate with scathing reprobation; and Mr. Croker, who had no Whig prejudices, has written an account of the young man's performances which confirms Johnson's strictures upon his character.<sup>17</sup> If we except the damaging advocacy of the "Morning Post," and the official sterility of the "London Gazette," Ministers had not much for which to thank the newspapers. The little "London Chronicle," a square foot in size, treated them with a friendliness tempered by its abhorrence of Lord Bute and the Scotch, whom, (like English mankind in general,) it persisted in regarding as the secret inspirers of George the Third and his Cabinet. The "Public Ledger" announced itself as a political commercial paper, open to all parties and influenced by none; and it bestowed on Lord North an occasional word of praise, accompanied by much good advice which he seldom heeded. And yet even the "Ledger" excused the American invasion of Canada as a step to which the colonists had been driven in self-defence. There were journals which, while they disapproved the war, still continued to speak well of the

<sup>17</sup> "Sir," said Johnson, "I will not allow this man to have merit. No, Sir; what he has is rather the contrary. I will, indeed, allow him courage; and on this account we so far give him credit. We have more respect for a man who robs boldly on the highway than for a fellow who jumps out of a ditch, and knocks you down behind your back. Courage is a quality so necessary for maintaining virtue that it is always respected, even when it is associated with vice."

This left-handed compliment,—the best that was to be said for Bate,—is to be found in the seventy-ninth chapter of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, as edited by the Right Honourable John Wilson Croker. Croker gives a short narrative of Bate's proceedings in a note subjoined to the passage. To the end of his days, which were many, "Parson Bate" was a famous patron of the prize-ring; and his prowess had been tested in many chance encounters. His admirers assure us that the professionals were much relieved by his refusal to step inside the ropes. Late in life he was made a Baronet. To such base use did that ancient, but unfortunate, order come at last.

Government; but in the whole circuit of the London Press no newspaper could be found which adopted the line of being in opposition to the Government, but in favour of the war.

In estimating the balance of British opinion during the American Revolution great importance must be attached to the views expressed by the newspapers; but not less significant was the impunity with which those views were given to the world. It has happened more than once that an Administration, already on the decline, has become powerful and popular when a war broke out, and has retained its advantage so long as that war endured; and, under the Georges, an accession of strength, and of public favour, meant a great deal more to a Government than it means now. A war ministry then, which had the country with it, was terribly formidable to political opponents at home. It might have seemed likely that, after the colonists had recourse to arms, journalists and pamphleteers who went counter to the royal policy would soon have a very bad time in England; but exactly the opposite result ensued. During the first fourteen years of George the Third, the ministerial censorship of the Press had been continuous, inquisitorial, and harsh almost to barbarity. The most exalted magistrates had placed themselves at the service of the executive with culpable facility; not for the first time in our history. Roger North, in his picturesque and instructive family biographies, reports how, throughout the civil dissensions of the seventeenth century, the time of the King's Bench was taken up with factious contentions; and he speaks of that Court as a place where more news than law was stirring. The law, as there laid down by Lord Mansfield in 1763, was fraught with grave consequences to all men who gained their livelihood by writing copy, or by setting up type. Informations began to rain like hail upon authors, editors, publishers, and printers. Crushing fines, protracted terms of imprisonment, and the open shame of the pillory, were, for several years to come, the portion of those who criticised the Cabinet in earnest. Their plight would have been hopeless if they had not sometimes found a refuge in the Common Pleas, where the president of the tribunal was Lord Chief Justice Pratt; who subsequently in the House of Peers, as Lord Camden, ably supported Lord Chatham's endeavours to reconcile Great Britain and America. Pratt, acting in the true spirit of the law wherever liberty was at hazard, and audaciously advancing the limits of his own jurisdiction when he otherwise could not rescue a victim, nobly vindicated the ancient reputation of his



Court.<sup>18</sup> As time went on, the ministerial majority in the House of Commons joined in the hunt; and Parliamentary Privilege, which had been devised for the protection of freedom, was perverted, amid scenes of scandalous uproar and irregularity, into an engine of tyranny.<sup>19</sup>

Ministers who had pursued such courses in a time of peace,—when they could not excuse their arbitrary measures by the plea of national danger, or the necessity for preserving an appearance of national unanimity,—might have been expected, when a war was raging, to have strained and over-ridden legality more unscrupulously than ever for the purpose of paying out old scores, and repressing fresh ebullitions of hostile criticism. But, though the clamour against the King and his ministers waxed ever more shrill and more pertinacious, the censorship seemed to have lost its nerve, and the Opposition press went forward on its boisterous way unmenaced and almost unmolested. Political trials became infrequent, and, after a while, ceased.<sup>20</sup> The voice of the Attorney-General calling for vengeance,—now upon grave constitutional essayists, or vehement champions of freedom; now upon some miserable bookseller's hack, and the compositors who had deciphered and printed his lucubrations,—was hushed and silent. Men wrote what they thought and felt, in such terms as their indignation prompted and their taste permitted. However crude and violent might be the language in which the newspapers couched their invectives, the legal advisers of the Government, when it came to a question of prosecution, were awed and scared by the consciousness that there existed immense multitudes of people for whom diatribes against the Court

<sup>18</sup> "The parties aggrieved," (so Lord Campbell writes,) "avoided the Court of King's Bench, and sought redress in the Court of Common Pleas from the Lord Chief Justice Pratt. He liberated Wilkes from the Tower on the ground of parliamentary privilege; and, declaring general warrants to be illegal, he obtained from juries very heavy damages for those who had been arrested, and whose papers had been seized, on the suspicion that they were concerned in printing, and publishing, the number of the *North Briton* which had been singled out for prosecution." *Life of Lord Mansfield*, chapter xxxvi.

Roger North's discriminating praise of the Common Pleas under the Stuart dynasty is sanctioned by what was then the highest known authority. "As the Lord Nottingham in one of his speeches expresseth, The law is there at home."

<sup>19</sup> The excesses into which Parliament was betrayed during those evil years, and the zest with which Fox led the riot within its walls, at an age when he ought to have been taking his degree at Oxford, may be seen in the fifth, sixth, and ninth chapters of the *Early History of Charles James Fox*.

<sup>20</sup> John Horne Tooke's trial, on a charge of seditious libel connected with the American controversy, took place as early as the second year of the war. His conviction injured the Ministry much more than it alarmed the Press.

and the Cabinet could not be too highly flavoured. Absolute liberty of discussion thenceforward prevailed; but, to the honour of English fairness, there was no immunity for gross slander. In the case of a false and foul charge, brought against a public man of either party, our tribunals showed themselves ready, according to the racy old judicial phrase, to lay a lying knave by the heels. The "Morning Post," in 1780, accused the Duke of Richmond of treasonable communication with the French Government. But that statesman's display of kindness towards British colonists, who would still have been the Duke's fellow-subjects but for an insane policy which he himself had consistently opposed, was no proof of guilty sympathy with a foreign enemy in the view of British jurymen. Nor were they disposed to overlook a flagrant insult offered to one of the real heroes of Minden, in order to gratify politicians who were not ashamed of sitting in the same Cabinet with Lord George Sackville. Bate was found guilty, and was incarcerated for a twelvemonth.

The exemption from maltreatment which Opposition publicists enjoyed was certainly not purchased by their own moderation or discretion. They wrote in a strain, sometimes of jovial impudence; sometimes of powerfully reasoned, and withering, animadversion; and their swoop was never so direct and savage as when they flew at the highest game. In the "North Briton" of the twenty-third of April 1763, Wilkes had commented on a King's Speech in terms very uncomplimentary to the Cabinet, but, wherever the King was mentioned, in decent and measured phrases. While the Speech was pronounced to be the most abandoned instance of official effrontery ever attempted to be imposed on mankind, it was expressly declared to be the production of unprincipled Ministers, which in a weak moment had been adopted as his own by a gracious King. At a later time in the annals of journalism, an amiable votary of literature,—whose virtues and weaknesses had rendered him harmless to everybody except himself,—applied to the Prince Regent a jeering epithet which any man of common sense, and the throne or near it, would have read with a contemptuous smile, and dismissed from his memory. And yet Leigh Hunt was heavily fined, and imprisoned for twenty-four months; and George the Third, during ten consecutive years, tried so hard to ruin Wilkes that, in the course of his operations, he came unpleasantly near to upsetting his own throne. The promptness and rigour with which attacks upon royalty were punished both before and since,—as compared to the boundless license which was permitted at that epoch when the sov-

ereign stood before the nation as a prime instigator, and a resolute supporter, of the American war,—may be taken as a measure of the distaste which that war then inspired in a very great number of Englishmen.

From 1775 onward the newspapers went straight for the King. The Empire, (they declared,) was under the direction of a bigoted and vindictive prince, whose administration was odious and corrupt in every part: so that the struggles of a handful of his subjects, made furious by oppression, had proclaimed the weakness of that Empire to the world. Those precise words were printed at the beginning of 1776; and towards the end of the year a Christian Soldier addressed George the Third in a sermon of a couple of columns, headed by the first seven verses of the Sixth Chapter in the Wisdom of Solomon. The denunciation against wicked rulers, which those verses contain, was a sufficient sermon in itself; but the preacher did not shrink from the duty of pressing his text home. "Have you not," he asked the King, "called your own pretensions the necessity of the State? Have you chosen for your Ministers and Counsellors men of the greatest piety, courage, and understanding? Have you not dreaded to have such around you, because they would not flatter you, and would oppose your unjust passions and your misbecoming designs?" And so the argument continued through a score of interrogatives, any one of which, five years before, or ten years before, would have sent the author, and his printer, and the printer's devils as well, to think out the answer to that string of irreverent queries in the solitude of Newgate.

Whenever the Ministry was mentioned in connection with the King, it was not for the purpose of shielding him from responsibility, but in order to upbraid him for having entrusted the government of the country to such a pack of reprobates. There could not, according to one journalist, be anything more unfortunate for a nation than for its Prince not to have one honest man about him. "Americans," wrote another, "are totally indifferent about every change of Ministers which may happen in the Court system. They care not who comes in. They know that a change of men implies nothing more than knaves succeeding to that power which former knaves were fools enough to abuse." The reason why England had come to be ruled by fools and knaves was illustrated by an historical anecdote duly pointed with italics. "Mr. Waller, the celebrated poet, being in the Closet with James the Second one day, the King asked him how he liked a picture

of the Princess of Orange. 'I think,' says Waller, 'she is very like the greatest woman in the world.' 'Whom do you call so?' said the King. 'Queen Elizabeth,' replied the other. 'I wonder, Mr. Waller,' said the King, 'you should think so, as Queen Elizabeth owed all her greatness to the wisdom of her Council.' *'And pray, sir,' says Waller, 'did you ever know a fool chuse a wise one?'*"<sup>21</sup>

These passages are a small nosegay of specimens culled from a vast, and not always fragrant, garden. Caradoc, and Britannicus, and Publius, and Ximenes, and Eumenes, and A True Whig, and A Friend to Liberty, were often dreadfully long-winded, and sometimes unconscionably violent; and yet many thousands of our forefathers read their effusions with solemn satisfaction, and never wished them shorter by a sentence, or less strong by a single superlative. Even where an assailant of the King had the grace to veil his attack beneath a guise of irony, he always took good care to make his meaning obvious. Before the winter Session of 1776, a contributor to a newspaper, signing himself "Aratus," was at the pains to compose an imaginary Speech from the throne. "My Lords and Gentlemen," (so George the Third was represented as saying,) "since the whole world knows how I have been deceived, I have chosen in this public manner to declare that I am now sensible of the errors into which I have been led by evil counsellors. I glory in avowing the disposition of my heart; and, convinced of the generosity and magnanimity of my people, I know they will approve my candour. I have no doubt that they will soon reduce France and Spain to peace, if they should dare to draw the sword against me. An English monarch must always be triumphant when he reigns in the heart of his people."

Odes, as Pindaric as a poet of the antechamber could make them, had long been considered by the French and English Courts to be the appropriate form in which literary incense should be burned before Kings. But George the Third very early learned,—what Louis the Great, to the grievous hurt of his dignity, had been taught by no less skilful a master than Matthew Prior,<sup>22</sup>—that poetry, and official poetry above any, presents a temptation which an idle and malicious humorist

<sup>21</sup> The London *Evening Post* of Saturday, September 27, to Tuesday, September 30, 1777.

<sup>22</sup> "Prior burlesqued, with admirable spirit and pleasantry, the bombastic verses in which Boileau had celebrated the first taking of Namur. The two odes, printed side by side, were read with delight in London; and the critics at Will's pronounced that, in wit as in arms, England had been victorious." Macaulay's *History of England*; chapter xxi.



finds it impossible to withstand. Regularly as Whitehead's New Year ode, and Birthday ode, were laid on the bookseller's counter, the whole tribe of scribblers betook themselves with never-failing relish to the work of parody. Opposition newspapers, all through the months of January and June, regaled their subscribers with interminable files of halting stanzas. In case the Laureate died, there was only too evidently a large supply of bards who, if they consented to change their political opinions, had every intellectual qualification for succeeding him. Everything which could be said for or against the King, and the King's Friends, and the King's Ministers, found its way into the strophes and antistrophes with which the town was deluged; and in that Amœbean contest it is hard to pronounce whether panegyrists, or detractors, of Royalty were the sorriest rhymers.<sup>23</sup> The Court ode, a sickly and unnatural species of composition from the very first,—whether original, or under the handling of a satirical imitator,—became positively nauseous from endless reiteration.

Incidents not unfrequently occurred which inspired more slashing writers with verses less unreadable, but often grossly and extravagantly unfair. The King was said to have been in the Royal box at the theatre when the report of a sanguinary battle reached London.

“At the play when the news of the slaughter arrived!  
 What! Pray is the ghost of old Nero revived?  
 A Cæsar to grin at a Foote or Macheath,  
 While perhaps his own armies are bleeding to death!

. . . . .

An empire disjoined and a continent lost!  
 The zeal of her children converted to hate,

<sup>23</sup> “So firm withal, he's fixed as Fate.  
 When once resolved, at any rate  
 He'll stick to his opinions;  
 And, nobly scorning to be crossed,  
 Has most magnanimously lost  
 Three parts of his dominions.

How blest the men he condescends  
 To honour with the name of Friends!  
 Where steadier could he choose him?  
 For, from my conscience I believe,  
 'Tis not in nature to conceive  
 The service they'll refuse him.”

These are the most presentable lines which can be discovered among the parodies on the Birthday Ode of 1776.

And the death of the parent involved in its fate;  
Her treasures exhausted, her consequence broke,  
Her credit a jest, and her terrors a joke!"

Those were the circumstances, (so Englishmen were bidden to observe,) under which poor George the Third, the most laborious and self-denying of public servants, had ventured forth for a much needed evening out. Such a theory of what propriety demanded constituted a very extensive interference with the King's recreations; for the time was at hand when never a day elapsed that some one, in some quarter of the globe, was not being killed in a war which, after the winter of 1777, the monarch kept afoot by his own personal influence against the very general wish of his people, and the judgement of all prudent members of his Cabinet.

In spite of some excesses, absurdities, and affectations, the best newspapers did much to maintain at a high level the character of the British Press. The conduct of the war by both belligerents was narrowly watched, and was criticised from week to week in outspoken prose not open to the charge of being either trivial or calumnious. There were grave and excellent writers who constituted themselves the guardians of their countrymen's honour, on whichever side of the quarrel those countrymen fought. They censured the arming of savages by the British War Office, and the burning of defenceless towns by British frigates; but they protested, with as warm disapproval, when the printing establishment of James Rivington, the New York Loyalist, was sacked by a mob of Whig raiders from Connecticut, and when insults were offered at Philadelphia to Quakers whose scruples would not allow them to take service against the Crown. Newspapers never shrank from expressing an opinion beforehand about strategical operations of the Government; and few were the instances where Lord George Germaine ultimately proved to be in the right, and the newspapers in the wrong. That most illogical test of patriotism which has been insisted upon by unwise rulers, and their flatterers, from the days of Ahab and Micaiah the son of Imlah downwards,<sup>24</sup> had no terrors for Englishmen of a vigorous and valiant generation; and very small attention was paid to ministerial partisans who brought charges of disloyalty against a military critic because he would not prophesy pleasant things.

<sup>24</sup> First Kings, chapter xxii., verses 1 to 38. "And the messenger, that was gone to call Micaiah spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good."

The Opposition newswriters, when the event showed their anticipations of failure to have been accurate, were bold to point the moral. "Who were they who brought His Majesty's army into a place from which it was a triumph to escape? If Boston was not a spot worth defending for its own sake, why did the troops continue there for near two years? Why were they reinforced until they amounted to near twelve thousand men? Why were four generals sent to command them? Why was the Ordnance Office emptied to defend Boston? Why was the Sinking Fund swallowed up? Why were sixty thousand tons of transports employed in that service? Why was the nation almost starved to feed that town? Why was so much brave blood shed at Bunker's Hill?"<sup>25</sup> These are questions which have never yet received an answer.

When, in January 1777, Howe was forced to abandon the Jerseys, and confine himself to the neighbourhood of New York City, those journalists who had been all along opposed to the expedition were exceedingly frank in their comments. They condemned the General for his faulty tactics; and still less did they spare the Minister. In making out their case against Lord North they appealed to that sound, and not ignoble, principle which had inspired the foreign policy of Burleigh and of Chatham, and had produced the victories won by Drake, and Clive, and Wolfe, and Amherst. On that principle the greatness of Britain was founded; for it consisted in the recognition of some reasonable proportion between the risks and the expense of hostilities, on the one hand, and the importance of the object for the sake of which those hostilities were commenced, on the other. Was Long Island, (the Opposition publicists inquired,) worth one fortieth part of what it had taken to recover it? If England was to reoccupy the whole of the American coast, at the rate it had cost to regain Long Island, would the entire landed estate of the kingdom, if sold to the best bidder, raise enough to pay for that ill-omened conquest?

A certain sense of comradeship between the two great branches of our people, which the war had not extinguished, was manifested in the feelings entertained by many Englishmen in England towards the Revolutionary leaders who had displayed energy and courage, and particularly towards such as had fallen in battle. After the repulse of the Americans before Quebec, Montgomery's body, by General Carleton's order, was borne into the town with every mark of reverence and regret, and buried with military honours. When the tidings of his

<sup>25</sup> Letter of Valens; July 11, 1776.

death reached the House of Commons, the most powerful orators, not on one side only, praised his virtues, and lamented his fate. Burke spoke of him with admiration. Lord North acknowledged that he was brave, able, and humane, and deplored that those generous epithets must be applied to one who had been a rebel; to which Charles Fox retorted that Montgomery was a rebel only in the same sense as were the old Parliament men of a hundred years ago, to whom those he saw around him owed it that they had a House of Commons in which to sit. Some ministerial supporters,—making the usual contribution to debate of senators who are eager to express their view, but afraid to take the floor,—greeted the remark with sarcastic laughter; and that laughter brought up Colonel Barré. He had been with Montgomery where French bullets were flying, and still had one of them embedded in his face; and, (on that occasion, as on others,) when Barré took upon himself to rebuke an impertinence, it was not apt to be repeated. A leading journal published its report of the evening's proceeding in a paragraph edged with deep black; and, to judge by the general tone of the press, the same would have been done by other newspapers if the idea had occurred to other editors. Close parallels were drawn, in divers odes and sonnets, between the characters of John Hampden and of Richard Montgomery, and between the causes in defence of which they received their death-wounds. There appeared about this time a political pamphlet, thinly disguised as a Dialogue of the Dead;—a species of composition which had been consummately executed by Lucian sixteen centuries ago, and more or less vapidly ever since; until, for the comfort of humanity, in our own generation it has at length ceased to be written at all. The author of this production, who evidently was a staunch partisan of the colonists, professed to relate the first interview between Montgomery, and his former chief, General Wolfe, when they renewed their friendship in the Elysian Fields.<sup>26</sup> Nor were American sympathies confined to those who wrote what was intended to be perused in the safe seclusion of the study. A play, dating from the last French war, and containing a graceful and pa-

<sup>26</sup> "It is a happy chance for me, brave Wolfe," (so Montgomery began,) "to find you alone in this solitary walk; since I may, without being interrupted, expatiate with you on the unjust contempt you have shown me from the day of my arrival in this delightful place." That is very well, but not exactly in the style of Lucian. The characters in the discussion, besides the two principals, were George Grenville and Charles Townshend; as well as David Hume, who strolled out of a shady valley to join in the talk, and eventually succeeded in reconciling the whole party. Hume had died in August 1776, just in time to take a share in the conversation.



thetic allusion to the hero who died before Quebec, was just then being given in London. The passage had been written for Wolfe; but the theatre applied it to Montgomery, "and fairly rocked with applause."

Washington, from the earliest hour, was handled by the London newspapers, and in the talk of London society, after a fashion which could hardly have been more respectful if his great destinies had already been accomplished. Indeed, his treatment by English writers and speakers during the war with England is in strong contrast to the rough usage which, towards the close of his career and in the heats of the French Revolution, he frequently experienced from that section of his own countrymen who were opposed to his foreign policy. "General Washington," wrote a London journalist in January 1776, "has so much martial dignity in his deportment that you would distinguish him to be a General and a Soldier among ten thousand people. There is not a king in Europe but would look like a valet-de-chambre by his side." A still more solid compliment was paid to him by Lord Chatham, who knew well how to address a practical-minded Parliament which commences business every day by petitioning that its monarch may be permitted in health and wealth long to live. "Mr. Washington," said Chatham in the House of Lords, "who now commands what is called this night the rebel force, is worth five thousand pounds a year."<sup>27</sup>

The American officer who, at this period of the struggle, had especially caught the fancy of Englishmen, was Benedict Arnold. His dash and fire, his hairbreadth escapes, the stories which were afloat about his rollicking and masterful demeanour, his cheerfulness in defeat,—and, above all, (for so Englishmen are made,) his hard-won successes,—commended him to a people which, next to a trusty servant, loves a gallant enemy. His picture was in shop-windows, and on the walls of many private rooms. Since it was pretty clear that the wound which would keep him quiet was not known to surgery, men prayed that he might be captured and brought a prisoner to England; but they would have been sincerely sorry if he had been carried off by death. Among the most severe, and, (if such a supremacy were possible,) quite the worst-rhymed, of all the contemporary pasquinades was addressed to "the partial paragraphist of the Gazette who, after being obliged to recount Colonel Arnold's rapid march, and his bravery and conduct, thought fit to obscure his merit by calling him 'one Arnold.'" Resentment against the carping and jealous attitude of his own Government,—which rankled in Arnold's heart, and at last impelled him

<sup>27</sup> Debate on the Address in the House of Lords; Thursday, Nov. 20, 1777.

to his undoing,—was pointed and intensified by a knowledge that his martial qualities were cordially appreciated by that British adversary who had so thoroughly tested them in the field.

However large might be the number of our countrymen who could not bring themselves to hate Americans, there was one nation, closer at hand, which the great mass of Englishmen made no pretence whatever of loving. The permanent, no less than the ephemeral, literature produced during the first twenty-five years of George the Third's reign was pervaded, to an extent unpleasant and even scandalous, by the animosity with which his subjects south of Tweed regarded his subjects who had been born, but were not content to live, north of that river. Englishmen had some excuse for their prejudice against Scotchmen, if only they had indulged it in moderation. Twice in human memory our borders had been penetrated, and our capital threatened, by a host of armed mountaineers; and those warriors, whatever romantic attributes they may possess in the imagination of posterity, most certainly did not impress their contemporaries as the sort of people by whom a highly civilised society would willingly be conquered and overrun. In 1715 a handful of Highlanders, with some Northumberland fox-hunters for cavalry, had advanced half-way through Lancashire before they were surrounded and destroyed; and, thirty years later, several thousand clansmen had marched to Derby, and had given the Londoners a fright from which not a few worthy citizens never entirely recovered.

But the Englishmen of 1776 had no need to sharpen their hatred of the Scotch by repeating to each other old stories which they had heard from their fathers and grandfathers. They themselves had experienced the calamities and humiliations of a third invasion; and this time the army of occupation had arrived to stay. As soon as Lord Bute was Prime Minister, he summoned southward, (beginning, but by no means ending, with his own kinsmen and retainers,) a multitude of compatriots to partake of his good fortune. An assaulting force, which is active and enterprising, is always estimated above its real numerical strength by the party of defence. Pensions, and patent places, and Court offices with quaint titles and easy salaries,—in the view of that English governing class whose perquisite they hitherto had been,—seemed fast becoming the monopoly of North British peers and North British members of Parliament. The sight was all the more vexatious because a Scotchman of family found means to save money, and to buy land,

from the proceeds of an office with the aid of which an English nobleman thought himself fortunate if he could keep the bailiffs out of his town-house, without even contemplating the possibility of paying off a farthing of the mortgages on his country estate. Untitled Scotchmen, meanwhile, abounded in the army, in the navy, in the Government departments, and in India and the colonies. Wherever they might be stationed, they did their work admirably, and, (instead of paying a deputy,) made a point of doing it themselves. Idle Englishmen of fashion saw with dismay that sinecures, the reversion of which they held or hoped for, in the hands of Scotch occupants were sinecures no longer; but, in despite of their industry and public spirit, their shrewdness and frugality,—and even, it is to be feared, all the more on account of those qualities,—the fellow-countrymen of Lord Bute met with the very reverse of gratitude from the nation which they served.<sup>28</sup>

Although thirteen long and eventful years had elapsed since Bute vacated office in 1763, he was still the fertile theme of gossip and suspicion. He had, indeed, been far from a popular minister when he stood openly at the sovereign's elbow as chief adviser and prime favourite; but he was not less detested, and much more feared, now that he was supposed, most erroneously and absurdly, to be manipulating the wires from behind the curtains of the throne. It may be doubted whether public opinion has ever been more profoundly affected by a more general and persistent illusion than in the case of the belief that Lord Bute was a motive power of George the Third's policy all the while that the American troubles were brewing, and as long as the war lasted. The Princess Dowager had died several years before a shot was fired; and the last remains of her old friend's political influence had died with her.<sup>29</sup> And yet the legend of an Interior Cabinet at Buckingham House, where Bute had the first and the last word in every con-

<sup>28</sup> The prevalence of these unamiable sentiments is amusingly illustrated by a conversation, the printed report of which remains to all time the very model of artistic treatment. When Johnson and Wilkes, approaching each other from the Antipodes of political opinion, met first at Mr. Dilly's table, a topic had to be found about which they were both agreed, and on which they both were known to talk their very best. By common consent, and with all the greater zest because it was a Scotchman who had brought them together, they at once fell to work against the Scotch.

<sup>29</sup> In July 1778 George the Third wrote to Lord North about the rumour of a political negotiation between the Earl of Chatham and the Earl of Bute. "I have read the narrative," (His Majesty said,) "of what passed between Sir James Wright and Dr. Addington, and am fully convinced of what I suspected before, that the two old Earls, like old coachmen, still loved the smack of the whip." Those were the terms in which the King referred to Lord Bute at a time when, according to Whig newspapers, that nobleman was omnipotent in the secret counsels of the State.



sultation, and where discussions were conducted in a jargon unintelligible to Southron Privy Councillors, was an established article of faith with the majority of patriotic Englishmen. Every odious measure, and every unexpected and exorbitant demand on the Exchequer, was habitually attributed to the machinations of a phantom conclave which passed by the name, sometimes of the Junta, and more often of the Thane's Cabinet. London was reminded several times a week, with a free use of capital letters, that the ruinous and unnaturally wicked conflict in consequence of which English families were mourning the loss of Husbands, Sons, and Brothers was a SCOTCH WAR; engineered by the relentless Bute, and the bloodthirsty Mansfield. If once peace were restored, that crafty and cruel Caledonian Judge would no longer be able to harangue the House of Peers about the duty of killing men, and would be reduced, like Domitian, to kill flies.<sup>30</sup> Despatches from Scotch colonial governors had kindled the war; Scotch counsellors had promoted it; Scotch violence had conducted it; and pamphlets from the pens of Scotch gazetteers,—whose necessities had taught them to write, though they could not talk, so as to be understood by Englishmen,—had deluded simple people into believing that the unconditional submission of America was necessary for the honour and safety of Great Britain. Those were the doctrines preached three times a week by Anti-Sejanus, and Historicus, and Politicus, and a whole tribe of able and uncompromising exponents, whose credit with the public steadily grew as hostilities went forward, and the cloud of misfortunes thickened. When Burgoyne had been captured, and when half Europe was on the eve of joining in an attack upon England, the newspapers authoritatively announced, in paragraphs marked by a semi-official turn of phrase, that the *private Cabinet*, of which the Earl of Bute was President, had met at an Honourable Lady's house, and had finally resolved to prosecute the war rather than part with their employments.

Burke, in a sentence which has been quoted in famous debate,<sup>31</sup> laid

<sup>30</sup> Ever since Lord Mansfield uttered his unfortunate sentence about killing Americans, he passed in newspapers by a name the use of which is the most cruel insult that can be offered to a British Judge. In January 1776 it was reported that the distress inside Boston exceeded the possibility of description, and that our troops were eating horse-flesh, and burning the pews for fuel. "But the — goes to the play, and laughs as usual; Jemmy Twitcher sings catches with his mistresses at Huntingdon; and sly old Jeffreys drops hints for shedding more blood."

<sup>31</sup> That was the quotation with which Mr. Gladstone began his reply to a chivalrous and heart-felt speech, by Mr. Gathorne Hardy, just before the division on the Second Reading of the Irish Church Bill. Mr. Hardy had made two yet finer orations in the course of the two preceding years; but those, who then heard Mr. Gladstone, find it difficult to believe that he ever had more profoundly and pleasurably stirred his audience than on that early morning in March 1869.



it down that an indictment cannot be brought against a nation. Nor, on the other hand, can a nation commence an action for libel; or else Scotland, in any year between the Second and Twenty-second of George the Third, might have secured exemplary damages from her traducers. The ball of vituperation, set rolling by Churchill and Wilkes, was kept in motion by less skilful, but far more unfair and ill-natured, players, long after Wilkes had grown lazy and indifferent, and when death had silenced Churchill. Scotland, and all that appertained to her, was the stock subject for the gall of the lampooner and the acid of the caricaturist; until the most omnivorous collector of eighteenth-century broadsheets and woodcuts turns aside in disgust when he espies the syllable "Mac" in a political ballad, or the flutter of a kilt in the corner of a coarse engraving. The storm of obloquy rose perceptibly higher when the American war began, and waxed more fierce as it proceeded. Sometimes a crafty adversary,—meeting Scotchmen with their own weapons, and affecting the character of a political economist whose feelings had been wounded by ministerial extravagance,—put forth a mass of exaggerated statistics clustered round a particle of fact. One day it was affirmed that the Scotch did not pay a fiftieth proportion with the English towards the Revenue, while, upon the most moderate computation, they enjoyed above half the emoluments of Government. On another morning the newspapers published a return of Scotchmen in receipt of public money, accompanied by an apology to the effect that the catalogue was unavoidably incomplete. But, even so, the placemen and pensioners whose names appeared on the list, were represented as drawing incomes from the Treasury to the tune of one hundred thousand a year more than the annual receipt of land-tax from the whole of Scotland.

Anti-ministerial writers vehemently contended that the continuance of the war, which was ruining the larger nation, brought nothing except gain to the smaller; and almost daily proofs were adduced in support of that assertion.<sup>32</sup> The Prohibitory Act, forbidding importation from America, had advanced the price of tobacco seventy per cent. Glasgow merchants, (it was alleged,) to whom the Chancellor of the Exchequer had dropped a hint, had laid in great quantities of that commodity, and were selling at their own prices; since the Junta

<sup>32</sup> "A miserable remnant of English nobility, with a few unprincipled commoners, are cunningly employed to bear the odium of the business; while embassies, governments, contracts, regiments, and all the profitable jobs and employments created by the calamities of the war, are without exception reserved for Murrays, Mackenzies, Stuarts, and Frazers;—Scotchmen who have been marked as enemies to liberty, and the vile instruments of two late horrid rebellions." Letter from an Essex Farmer; July 21, 1776.

would not let slip such a favourable opportunity of enabling Scotch middlemen to fatten on the plunder of English consumers. Government inspectors were said to have passed without examination all the stores provided by Scotch contractors, who accordingly supplied the army with food too bad to be eaten by any except Scotch soldiers, who fed worse at home.<sup>33</sup> It was a standing rule, (so the story ran,) both at the War Office and the Admiralty, that, when things went wrong, it was never the fault of a Scotchman. The Greyhound frigate, a vessel of a class that in the last war used to capture privateers with thirty-six guns, had been beaten off by an American ship carrying only twenty-six cannon; but the captain was a Scotchman, "and the Ministry would sooner, once in a while, confess Americans to be brave than admit their favourite Scots to lack courage."

South-countrymen, who wished to live out of the taxes, could not be expected to welcome the incursion of a fresh and hungry herd into the very pick of the Treasury pastures. But even those quiet and unambitious Englishmen, who were honourably contented to carry their labour into the open market, sincerely believed that the bread was taken out of their mouths by Scotch competition; and, if they failed to perceive the injury which was inflicted upon them, it was not for want of telling. A man of spirit, (so they were informed,) would endeavour to explore new lands until times grew better, and would cross the seas on a butcher's tray, if he could not afford a Thames wherry, rather than starve at home under a reign when none except Scotchmen might thrive in England. A correspondent, signing himself Hortulanus, related a sorrowful tale which was calculated to inspire uneasiness in a very large and estimable body of work-people. He described himself as having been dismissed, with seven English gardeners who had worked under him, by a country gentleman, a kind and good master, who had been perverted by the example of a great person in the neighbourhood. This unpatriotic nobleman, a member of Lord North's Administration, was extremely fond of Scotch architects, Scotch politicians, and Scotch butlers and footmen; and he employed no fewer than fourteen of the ten thousand Scotch gardeners who had ousted Englishmen from all the most expensively equipped establish-

<sup>33</sup> "A correspondent asks whether General Howe has any horses to draw his artillery and waggons, without which he will never get to Philadelphia. The horses sent by Mr. Fordyce are all dead. This is a pretty job; but Mr. Fordyce is a Scotchman, and intends to be member for Colchester. He has canvassed the *toone*, and prepared *aw* things in readiness. Contracts are fine things! How many millions of English money will the Scotch profit by in this war?" London Newspaper of October the 11th, 1776.

ments in the south of the island. Why, (the indignant writer asked,) should men born in a cold region, where neither plants, fruits, nor flowers, could flourish,—where the sun could not ripen a grape, and where half-starved spiders fed upon half-starved flies,—be preferred to the inhabitants of a country for which nature was more generous, and the sun more warm and prolific? “Old as I am and encumbered by a family, I offered to work under these Caledonian favourites; but my offer was not accepted. The Steward, who pitied my case, told me I should lead a wretched life with the Scots, who would consider me, and treat me, as a foreigner; for it was their usual custom, on getting into a family, to introduce their own countrymen, and turn out all the old servants.”<sup>34</sup>

Hortulanus, in all probability, never cultivated anything except the flower-pots outside an attic window in Soho; but he, and plenty like him, had mastered the easy trick of handling those topics of international prejudice, and trade jealousy, which go straight home to the apprehensions of common men. The majority of readers, alarmed and sore, accepted in good faith these provocative statements, which were often deliberately invented, or dishonestly over-coloured. They relished their newspaper all the more when it contained an appeal to the memory of a prince who, alive or dead, was incomparably the most popular member of the reigning family throughout the country, and especially in the capital. It has been wittily said that, from the time Lord Bute took office, many Englishmen, and most Londoners, refused to admit any blemish on the fame of the victor of Culloden, and found no fault with his Royal Highness except that he had left too many Camerons and Macphersons to be made gaugers and custom-house officers. Scotchmen, (wrote a vigorous controversialist,) seemed to vie with each other in the business of fettering our fellow-subjects in America, and of subjugating a brave, a loyal, and a free people to absolute slavery and bondage; but their cunning and persistent efforts were really levelled not so much against the liberties of the colonists as against the liberties of Englishmen. “But, alas, since the demise of the Saviour of England, the late worthy Duke of Cumberland,—Wully the Butcher, as the Scotch call him,—an Englishman dare scarce look

<sup>34</sup> The letter is in the London *Evening Post* of September 11, 1777. Macaulay, among his collection of newspapers relating to the American war, had acquired all the volumes of the London *Evening Post* on which he could lay his hands. That was part of the preparations made for continuing his *History of England* down to a time which was within the memory of men still living, and for relating “how imprudence and obstinacy broke the ties which bound the North American colonists to the parent state.”

a Scotchman in the face.”<sup>35</sup> Such was the overcharged invective which habitually disfigured the public journals. Our progenitors, it must be admitted, occasionally came rather oddly by opinions which they held very stubbornly; and a vast number of Englishmen were confirmed and rooted in their friendship towards America because with some cause, but out of all measure, they envied and disliked the Scotch.

<sup>35</sup> Letter by Toby Trim; January 29, 1777.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE CITY OF LONDON. NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE. THE NATION AND THE WAR

SINCE the beginning of that century which now was far gone, the City of London, in time of war, had always been a centre of warlike feeling. In 1701 it eagerly rallied to William the Third whom it did not greatly love, when he proudly and indignantly accepted the challenge of the French King. In 1711 the butchery of Malplaquet had sickened the nation; and the national conscience was revolted by the wanton prolongation of the horrors of a war, the objects of which might long ago have been secured by a prudent and disinterested Cabinet. The new Tory Ministry, which had displaced Godolphin, was actually negotiating with France; and yet the City of London made preparations for greeting Marlborough, as leader of the war-party, with a popular demonstration so aggressive and significant that it was very properly suppressed by the Government in the name of peace and order. During the Seven Years' War the Corporation supported Chatham with enthusiasm and devotion. After he fell from power, and was succeeded by ministers who thought that there had been enough fighting, he was honoured,—on his way to the Guildhall, and inside its walls,—with a reception such as no subject has ever experienced in English history. But in 1775 the hostilities in Massachusetts found City opinion sullen and recalcitrant; and that state of mind rapidly developed into angry and determined opposition.

All the four members for London voted steadily against the war from first to last. The Corporation carried Humble Remonstrances to the foot of the Throne with so much persistency that George the Third would almost as willingly have seen at St. James's the blue and yellow uniforms of Washington's army as the red gowns, and furred caps, and

heavy gold chains of the City officers.<sup>1</sup> Every successive appearance of that all too familiar group at the door of his Presence Chamber indicated that he would once more have to listen, with some show of civility, to a long screed of manly common sense which he strongly suspected Mr. Alderman Wilkes of having drafted. The Recorder of London wore mourning in public "for the brothers whom he had lost at Lexington;" and his conduct so far met the view of those who had elected him that, when he died no long time after, the Court of Aldermen appointed a successor who notoriously held the same opinions. Through these trying months John Sawbridge was Chief Magistrate of the City, as well as one of its parliamentary representatives. He was a person of social consequence; a country gentleman, a Colonel of Militia in his county, and a high authority in the clubs of St. James's Street, where he was accounted the best whist player in town. Wealthy, proud, and honest, he was beholden to no minister, and afraid of no one. He had stood up in face of the Government majority at Westminster, in its most insolent moods, as often and as sturdily as did Barré, and Savile, and Dowdeswell; and only less frequently than Edmund Burke and Charles Fox. The courage and vigour with which, at the Mansion House and in the Commons, Sawbridge thwarted and rebuked the operations of the Cabinet, secured him enormous popularity as Lord Mayor, and a safe seat for life as a member for the City.

Sawbridge strengthened his influence among Liverymen by the somewhat unscrupulous audacity with which he asserted the privileges and immunities of the City in a matter about which almost all citizens were of one mind. At the outbreak of hostilities the Board of Admiralty was even more behindhand in its preparations than the War Office, and with less excuse. Lord Barrington, the Secretary at War, had always cherished a hope that the dispute would be settled by negotiation, and had done what he dared, (which was not much,) to bring that result about; whereas Sandwich, the First Lord of the Admiralty,—who was in the inner counsels of the Government, and the spokesman for his colleagues in the House of Peers,—had consistently laboured, both in Parliament and behind the scenes, to embroil the relations between England and her colonies. He, at all events, was bound to provide that, so far as his own Department was con-

<sup>1</sup> "The day before the sheriffs went to know when the King would receive the Address, he said to a young man who was hunting with him; 'I must go to town to-morrow to receive those fellows in furs. They will not be very glad to see me, nor I them.'" *Last Journals*; Dec. 1781.

cerned, the country should be in a position promptly, and strongly, to enforce by arms a policy for the adoption of which he himself was so largely responsible. And yet, as late as December 1774, he had deliberately reduced the Navy by four thousand men, on a total strength of twenty thousand, of whom a full quarter were Royal Marines. Eleven months afterwards he called on Parliament to vote an addition of twelve thousand men. The number of seamen was doubled in a single evening; and the process of violently and suddenly withdrawing so vast a multitude from their homes, their habits, and their avocations, paralysed commerce, and caused wide-reaching and unnecessary suffering to individuals.

The newspapers made known the story with a copious employment of those nautical terms which were familiar to a sea-going nation. Thirty sail of ships, (it was reported,) were "tumbling in Yarmouth Roads at single anchor," without anyone on board any of them except the master, and a few little cabin-boys. As many more lay in Harwich harbour, losing their voyage at a time when there was a great demand for their cargoes in the London markets. A captain, who owned his vessel, and whose sailors had been taken out of her by the press-gang in an Essex haven, paid fifty-six guineas for a crew to work her round to London; whereas, with his own people to help him, it would have been done for as many shillings. The mariners of the Northern counties, formidable in a strike or a Revenue-riot, were not submissive under this more serious invasion of their liberty. Hundreds of prime seamen left their families penniless in the ports of Durham and Northumberland, and ran off, with the project of remaining away until the heat of the Press was abated. But that time was long in arriving; for the maritime conscription grew more active and stringent as the necessities of the country deepened, and her enemies multiplied. Discontent after a while led to open violence. The impressed men, on board a tender in the river between North and South Shields, rose upon the crew, took possession of the ship, and carried her to sea under cannon-fire from her consorts, and from a fort which protected the entrance of the channel. A week or two afterwards a Lieutenant of the Royal Navy organised a raid upon the Colliers which lay in the estuary. A great number of sailors came to the help of the vessel which he first attacked, and mustered on the forecastle to repel boarders. The fight commenced with lumps of coal and billets of wood on the part of the defenders, answered on the other side by a blunderbuss, which first missed fire, and then killed a man at whom it had not been aimed.

Newcastle citizens, who had learned by repeated experience the temper and quality of a Quayside mob, felt greatly relieved when they ascertained that Lieutenant Oakes and his party had escaped with their lives.<sup>2</sup>

In and below London the misery was intense; and the resistance of the sufferers, though less determined, entailed a longer list of fatal accidents. Upwards of a thousand seamen were captured in the Thames alone. Towards the end of October 1776, twenty armed boats came up river from Deptford and Woolwich, and took every man, except the master and mate, from every ship that they found in the stream. A Royal officer was shot with a pistol as he went up the side of a vessel; and eight merchant-sailors endeavoured to escape by swimming, and were drowned in the attempt. The West Indian captains, especially, were in pitiable case. They had everything ready for weighing anchor. Their holds were full; they had paid their crews for the time spent in the river, and for a month of the voyage in advance; and now every man who slept before the mast was carried off with his money in his pocket. The needs of the Royal Navy had to be met with a hurry which did not admit of careful selection, or of a decent regard for individual claims to indulgence and consideration. The hatches of the tenders were battened down upon a mixed crowd of fisher-folk and merchant-sailors, with sore hearts and undressed wounds; of townsmen who had never been on board a ship before; and of old broken mariners who had gone to sea so often, and for so long, that they had earned a right to spend the rest of their days where, and how, they chose. One press-gang had to answer in the law-courts for having laid hands on a veteran whose skull had been fractured in the last French war. Another swept off a group of people from a lottery office, while they were engaged on insuring the numbers which they had drawn. "Come, my lads," said the lieutenant, "I will insure you for good berths on board a ship of war." A knot of labouring men, who had been buying their family dinners, were assailed on their way homewards, and showed fight to some purpose. One sailor was knocked down with a leg of mutton, and another with a bundle of turnips; and, before their party could make good their retreat, the whole of them had been ducked by the crowd. That was a touch of pantomime, in the midst of many silent and obscure domestic tragedies. An advertisement appeared to the effect that the bodies of five impressed men, suffocated in the hold of the Hunter tender, had been brought on

<sup>2</sup> *Local Records of Northumberland and Durham*; by John Sykes, Newcastle, 1832.



shore to be owned. It was uncongenial work for bluff, hearty, tars who were told off for that odious duty. The crime, (so a spirited journalist reminded his readers,) rested not on the sailor's bludgeon, nor on the lieutenant's cutlass, but on the unthinking head of a minister who, through many years of peace, forgot the future probability of a war, and left every precaution alone until it was too late to act without violating humanity.

Enthusiasm for the naval service there was none. The war was barren of prize money; no glory was to be obtained out of a campaign against privateers commanded by Yankee skippers who knew very well when to attack, and when and whither to run; and, moreover, many a poor fellow, who in days gone by had helped to beat the French and Spaniards, was in his rude way a patriot. Mariners, who had served the guns under Hawke and Saunders, had no mind for exchanging shot and blows with men who fought their ship in English fashion, and who, when the battle had gone against them, begged for quarter with an English tongue. The irritation caused by the harsh and precipitate action of the Admiralty was general throughout London, and nowhere so acute as within the City bounds. It was a short journey to Cornhill from Rotherhithe and Greenwich, opposite the river front of which the Jamaica fleet lay, and seemed likely to lie until the timbers rotted; and West Indian captains, and their employers, might be seen whispering together with long faces under the colonnades of the Royal Exchange, and across the tables of the neighbouring coffee-houses. The dignity of the Corporation was offended by the invasion of the press-gangs; and the City fathers had been touched in a tender point, for the supply of fish was scanty and irregular. Essex boatmen had transferred themselves and their nets to Holland; and a naval officer, of more than common hardihood, braving a storm of malediction from the conception of which the imagination shrinks, laid forcible hands on a number of seamen in the very heart of Billingsgate market.

That district lay within the Lord Mayor's jurisdiction; and the situation was still further strained by the impressment of Mr. John Tubbs, a Waterman of the Lord Mayor's Barge.<sup>3</sup> The outraged Magis-

<sup>3</sup> *Rex versus Tubbs* became a leading case in the King's Bench, where Lord Mansfield took occasion to deliver himself in favour of the legality of pressing for the Royal Navy. "A pressed sailor," he pronounced, "is not a slave. No compulsion can be put upon him except to serve his country; and, while doing so, he is entitled to claim all the rights of an Englishman." The readers of Smollett, and even of Captain Marryat, may be permit-

trate issued an order for the apprehension of all naval officers who carried on their operations inside the limits of the City. Three lieutenants and a mate, belonging to a ship of the line, were arrested, and brought before the Guild-hall Bench. A very eminent Judge attended the examination in order to support the accused officers with his countenance and advice. His Lordship was stiffly rebuked by the sitting Aldermen, who told him that they themselves would never venture to intrude their presence upon him in his own Court on such an errand. The defendants refused to find bail, and were duly committed to the Poultry Counter, where they remained in durance until the Attorney and Solicitor General gave it as their opinion that bail had better be procured. At one moment it seemed as if the forcible enlistment of seamen within the City would be impracticable. The Lord Mayor declined to back the press-warrants; and his example was afterwards followed by Sir Thomas Halifax, his successor in the Chair. But that difficulty was surmounted by the warrants being taken for signature to Alderman Harley, as stout a Tory as ever Sawbridge was a Whig. Harley, who was grand-nephew of the celebrated Earl of Oxford, had a good hereditary title to show for his political opinions; and, as a firm supporter of Lord North, he had opportunities placed at his disposal which enabled him to make a mountain of money by the war.<sup>4</sup>

There had been a war anterior to 1776, and there have been wars since, when the youth of the City,—abandoning the employments by

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ted to question what those rights were worth to a landsman with a broken head, imprisoned many feet below the water-line in the hold of a frigate which had put to sea for a three years' cruise in distant waters.

<sup>4</sup> The impunity with which press-gangs acted, and the terror that they inspired among humble civilians, are amusingly illustrated by a story from the unpublished Memoirs of Archbishop Markham. Some years after the American war a party of Westminster boys dressed themselves up as men-of-war-men;—which was not difficult in days when an officer kept watch on board ship in any costume which he found most comfortable. They stationed themselves at the corner of Abingdon Street, and were headed by a stout lad in a pea-jacket and hairy cap, “who had acquired the art of making a cat-call by whistling through his fingers,” and who personated the lieutenant. They promptly pounced on the first passer-by; examined him; pronounced him a fit person to serve his Majesty; and then dexterously loosed their hold, and allowed him to run. While they were occupied over their fifth victim, an under-master came by, and the sport ended. Dr. Vincent thought the affair so serious that he called in the Archbishop, who in his day had been a Head-master of Westminster with whom no scholar ever trifled. “That,” said the old man of the world, “was a very smart piece of fun. Now do show me the hairy cap!” and the boys got off with a hundred lines of Virgil apiece.

It was said that gold-laced hats were worn by people who could ill afford them, because they had a military look, and were therefore a protection against the attentions of the press-gang.

which they lived, and giving up, in some cases, assured and attractive prospects of commercial advancement,—took arms for the prosecution of a quarrel which they regarded as their country's cause. But the dispute with America excited no enthusiasm in the mercantile community. Whatever martial ambition might exist among respectable civilians was deadened and discouraged by the humiliating possibilities which awaited every volunteer who donned the scarlet coat. It was almost universally believed in military circles that flogging was a valuable preservative of discipline at home, and quite indispensable on active service. That last named article of belief has died hard, and it survived the longest in official quarters. It was the task of independent members of Parliament, some of whom are not yet old men, to break it down by argument; and practical experience, on a scale and of a nature which enforces conviction, has now finally settled the controversy. Within the last four years, in South Africa, order and obedience have been effectively maintained, without recourse to corporal punishment, in by far the largest and the most variously constituted force that Great Britain ever put into the field, and kept there over a very long space of time under circumstances exceptionally trying to the spirits and temper of an army. Some of our most distinguished officers, for more than a century past, felt sufficient faith in their countrymen to anticipate a happy result which now is matter of history;<sup>5</sup> but, during the war of the American Revolution, such wise and far-seeing prophets were few. On an April day of 1777 the whole neighbourhood of Whitehall was disturbed by the most dreadful shrieks, proceeding from the Parade-ground behind the Horse-guards and the Treasury. A soldier was receiving the first instalment of a thousand lashes; and a hundred were afterwards inflicted upon a drummer whose heart had

<sup>5</sup> "At the same time that the British soldiers were maintaining with such devoted fortitude the glory of England, their camps daily presented the most disgusting and painful scenes. The halberts were regularly erected along the lines every morning, and the shrieks of the sufferers made a pandemonium, from which the foreigner fled with terror and astonishment at the severity of our military code. Drunkenness was the vice of the officers and men; but the men paid the penalty; and the officers who sate in judgement in the morning were too often scarcely sober from the last night's debauch. It will be a consummation of my most anxious wishes, grounded upon my memory of these early scenes of abuse of power, when the system of punishment, such as I have described it, shall be referred to only as a traditional exaggeration." So wrote General Sir Robert Wilson with reference to the campaign in Flanders of the year 1794. That was the end of what had been worst. The standard of personal behaviour among officers in Wellington's Peninsular army was high; and punishments, though still very severe, became less frequent when the soldiers could look to their superiors for a worthy example, and for watchful and kindly guidance.

failed him during the operation. When such things were done in St. James's Park, a stockbroker or a clerk, of reputable character and good position, would unavoidably reflect as to what might be his fate when he was on detached service in the backwoods of America, at the mercy of an unfriendly and tyrannical sergeant who possessed the confidence of the regimental officers.

The American war brought into the City a tribe of interlopers whose presence there was viewed with moral repugnance by the worthiest portion of the community, and who inflicted very serious damage upon the material interests of established traders and financiers. Sometimes it was a man of rank and pleasure, and sometimes an impudent and voluble upstart of doubtful antecedents, who came eastward through Temple Bar armed with a contract for rum, or beef, or army-cloth, which replaced to him, many times over, the three or four thousand pounds that he had sunk in the purchase of his seat for a Cornish borough. When the Chancellor of the Exchequer had recourse to one of his frequent borrowings, he passed over the hereditary bankers whom investors trusted, and who would have been satisfied with a fair and reasonable commission for their risk and trouble. The money was largely raised through the agency of a great number of members of Parliament,—who, for the most part, had never lent anything before in their lives, but had borrowed much,—on terms of scandalous laxity which had been arranged for the express purpose of rewarding them for their votes. Lord North himself admitted that, on a single loan of twelve millions, upwards of a million had gone in clear profit among the individuals to whom it had been allotted; and half of them were politicians who sate behind him in the House of Commons. "I agree with you," (Lord Abingdon wrote to Lord Rockingham,) "in thinking the loan to be a very abominable transaction." That was how clean-handed senators viewed the disgraceful proceedings; but harder things still were said in bank-parlours. The spectacle of fine gentlemen, and of some gentlemen who were anything but fine, masquerading about Threadneedle Street and Birchin Lane with the air of partners in Glyn's or Child's, and talking a financial jargon which they supposed to resemble the conversation of the capitalists whose gains they intercepted, inspired in genuine City men a disgust which, (since they were neither more nor less than human,) pointed and sharpened their disapprobation of the Government policy in America.

That disapprobation was grounded upon large knowledge and long observation. The City had been firmly persuaded that the knot of



colonial discontent could never be cut by the sword. The Funds always fell after British defeats, and never very visibly recovered themselves in consequence of a British victory. In August 1774, before the Revolution began, the Three per Cent. Consols stood at 89. A month before the news of Long Island arrived in London they were at 84; a fortnight after that news they were at 82; and that was all the effect produced by a complete rout of the Americans, which was hailed by courtiers at home, and English diplomatists abroad, as a most reassuring, and almost a conclusive, success. By October 1777 Consols had fallen to 78. The tidings of the capture of Burgoyne brought them down to 70. They fell, and fell, until the capitulation of Lord Cornwallis reduced them to 54; and they could hardly have gone lower if they were to retain any value at all. Then Lord North made way for a Ministry pledged to recognise the independence of America, and to abandon the right of taxing her wealth and controlling her commerce; a right which Lord North and his adherents had always insisted to be absolutely essential for maintaining the prosperity of British trade and British manufactures. And yet Consols, when the situation came to be understood, rose six points on the mere prospect of a peaceful settlement with our former colonies; although England was still at war, all the world over, with France, Spain, and Holland. The silent testimony of the Stocks, those authentic witnesses who never boast and never flatter, unanswerably proves that the City of London at no period shared with the Court and the Cabinet in the delusion that the colonies could be subdued by arms.

The state of opinion in London was evident on the surface; but it is more difficult to collect indications of the feeling which prevailed elsewhere. The sentiments, however, which were current in one famous region of industry and enterprise have been recorded by a witness whose evidence on this point is above suspicion. Samuel Curwen, a prominent Massachusetts Loyalist,—who had been a high official in his native province, and who now was an exile in England,—made a tour in the Midland counties, and spent a week at Birmingham. Walking there on the Lichfield road, Curwen was invited indoors by a Quaker, and found him “a warm American, as most of the middle classes are through the Kingdom.” He passed an agreeable day with a merchant, who had been in America, and who was “her steady and ardent advocate.” He stepped into the shop of a gunmaker. The British Ministry,—with foresight which, for the War Office, might almost be called inspiration,—had given the man an order to construct six

hundred rifles for the use of General Howe's army: and yet, (said Curwen,) "he is an antiministerialist, as is the whole town."<sup>6</sup> If such was the case in a district where Government orders for military supplies had been freely placed, it may well be believed that political discontent and disgust were not less acute in those commercial centres which greatly suffered, and in no way profited, by the existence of hostilities. Yorkshire manufacturers, especially, had no part in the war except to pay increased taxes; to borrow from their banker on terms, that every month grew worse, money that every month they needed more; and to see their warehouses glutted with goods which they were forbidden to sell to those New Englanders, and Pennsylvanians, who had formerly been their very best customers. "In the West Riding," wrote John Wesley, "a tenant of Lord Dartmouth was telling me, 'Sir, our tradesmen are breaking all round me, so that I know not what the end will be.' Even in Leeds I had appointed to dine at a merchant's; but, before I came, the bailiffs were in possession of the house. Upon my saying, 'I thought Mr. — had been in good circumstances,' I was answered, 'He *was* so, but the American war has ruined him.'"<sup>7</sup>

One considerable provincial town had an opportunity of showing, at a critical conjuncture, that within the circuit of its walls there existed no very general predilection for Lord North's American policy. The opponents of a war are never so weak and helpless for the purposes of an election as at a time when, towards the commencement of hostilities, the country has met with a military reverse. While the resources of the people are still abundant, and their eagerness unimpaired, they hotly resent the circumstance of having been foiled by an enemy, and especially by an enemy whom their rulers have encouraged them to despise; and any candidate who advocates concession and conciliation is almost sure to receive a disagreeable lesson at the polls. That was precisely the military situation in the second month of 1777, when the news of Trenton, of Princeton, and of Howe's retirement to New York, were published in the English Journals. It was a moment when, (if only the country had been in favour of the war,) no advocate of peace would have ventured to face a parliamentary contest unless he could afford to lose at least thirty per cent. of the votes which in quieter times would have been cast for his party.

In that very month died Sir Walter Blackett of Northumberland,

<sup>6</sup> Samuel Curwen's *Journal* for August 1776.

<sup>7</sup> John Wesley to Lord Dartmouth: *Historical Manuscripts Commission; Fifteenth Report, Appendix, Part I.*

who, like many other faithful supporters of the Ministry, had begun public life as a mild Jacobite. His friends claimed that he was the father of the House of Commons. He had sat forty-three years for Newcastle-on-Tyne; and his family had represented that city, with hardly any break, for over a century. Whoever held the Corporation was supposed to hold the seat in Parliament; and never was so wealthy and powerful a municipality so loyally devoted to one man as the Corporation of Newcastle to Sir Walter Blackett. He derived an enormous income from lead-mines and coal-mines, lands and shipping; and he always spent every farthing of it before the year was out. Inexhaustibly charitable; affable and accessible to all; a lavish patron of the church, and a splendid benefactor to the town,—he had most of the virtues that cause a man to be beloved, and a large assortment of frailties which, in those far from Puritanical days, told rather for than against his personal popularity. His hospitality was once a proverb in the North of England, and is still a tradition. The town residence of the Blacketts had formerly lodged Charles the First during the eight months which that monarch spent at Newcastle in custody of the Scotch army. It was described by local historians and antiquaries as a princely house, surrounded by spacious pleasure-grounds, “very stately and magnificent; supposed to be most so of any house in the whole kingdom within a walled town;”<sup>8</sup> and Newcastle still preserved the gates and towers which in 1745 had baffled the Highlanders. That mansion was the scene of frequent and profuse feasting; and, when Sir Walter was at his country home, any Aldermen or Common Councillors, who cared to ride twenty miles on a summer morning over the northern moors and pastures, might have their fill of venison from the deer-park which their host kept up for the sake of his political influence, and of the famous Tokay which was consigned to him direct from Hungary. There were few fellow-townsmen of Sir Walter Blackett who took exception to the inscription on an engraving from one among those pictures of him by Sir Joshua Reynolds which adorn the public buildings of Newcastle. “All our whole city,” (so the quotation ran,) “is much bound to him.”

The guardians of that city evinced their gratitude by a watchful care of his political interests. Every elector in the constituency, with the exception of half a dozen unattached burgesses, was a member of one among the two-and-thirty guilds; and the officers of the Corpora-

<sup>8</sup> Brand's *History and Antiquities of the Town, and County of the Town, of Newcastle upon Tyne*; London, 1789: note to page 341 of Vol. I.

tion were very particular in seeing that any adherent of the Blacketts should be enrolled as a freeman without being put to unnecessary expense or trouble. On Sir Walter's death it was taken for granted that his nephew, Sir John Trevelyan, who held his uncle's opinions, and who had succeeded to his landed estate, would occupy his seat in Parliament as a matter of course; but the electoral independence of Newcastle found an unexpected and a curious champion. Andrew Robinson Stoney was a bankrupt Irish lieutenant in a marching regiment, who had already wedded and buried a Tyneside heiress, after wasting her substance and breaking her heart. In January 1777,—by means of a plot to which he contrived to give the appearance of a sordid romance,—he succeeded in marrying the widow of Lord Strathmore; who, as Miss Bowes, had inherited a very large fortune, and a country house some little way from Newcastle, on the Durham bank of the river. Mr. Stoney took his wife's family name, and, indeed, everything else of hers on which he could lay his hand by law, or force, or fraud. Thackeray, in depicting Barry Lyndon, drew from Stoney Bowes, and flattered him; but Lady Lyndon, (and a wonderful portrait it is,) was the Countess of Strathmore all over.

The fight was keen, the canvass importunate, and the coercion unmerciful. Very much was talked and printed, on the one side, concerning the debt which Newcastle owed to the Blacketts; and, on the other, about the disgrace of converting a great city into a family borough. Sir John was abused as an anti-Wilkite, a Ministerial satellite, and a heavy-headed Somersetshire foxhunter; nor had the Tories any difficulty in getting something to say against Stoney Bowes, than whom a more consummate villain never went through this world unhorsewhipped, and left it unhung.<sup>9</sup> So far, however, as can be gathered from the literature of the election, (and a great mass of it has been preserved,) no allusions were made to the American controversy by partisans of the Government, and not very many by its adversaries; but those few were strong and uncompromising. Lord North's candidate kept all mention of the war studiously in the background. When asked about his views and principles, he would reply that he was a plain country-gentleman who proposed to reside much in Northumberland if the electors of Newcastle returned him to Parliament. No single circumstance was of more profit to Mr. Stoney Bowes than an attempt which had been recently made to represent Newcastle as an

<sup>9</sup> *The Lives of Andrew Robinson Bowes and the Countess of Strathmore*, by Jesse Foot, Surgeon; London, 1810; *passim*.



anti-American community. The proclamation of hostilities, in the preceding September, had been heard by the populace of that city amid dead silence; and there soon followed an open meeting of free burgesses, twelve hundred of whom signed a petition against the war, and entrusted it for presentation to no less eminent a Whig than Sir George Savile. Thereupon Sir Walter Blackett and Sir Matthew White Ridley, the sitting members, had procured an Address to the King, urging the subjugation of the colonies. The document was backed by fewer than two hundred names;—and not many of those signatures, (so the opponents of the Government averred,) would have commanded the confidence of a prudent bill-broker if affixed to mercantile paper.<sup>10</sup>

Each party polled alternately in tallies of twelve, day by day, and week after week; during all which time the entire staff of the Corporation, high and low, were busy in securing votes for the Government interest. Quiet people complained that Mace-bearers, Marshals, Sergeants, Gaolers, and even Recorders, attacked them in the streets, and blockaded them in their houses, more like debtors and felons than Englishmen and freemen. Some of the Guilds swarmed with paupers; and every pauper voted for Sir John Trevelyan. As ministerial candidate, he was supported by all the sixty-five Custom-house officers. No seafaring man, under the rank of mate, dared present himself at the polling-booth unless he had obtained, from the naval officer of the port, a guarantee that he should not be impressed while the election lasted. The Admiralty was then governed by a First Lord who treated our Naval Service as if it were an organisation designed, and maintained, for the discomfiture of his own political opponents; and a mariner, who had kept himself hitherto out of the clutches of the press-gang, would think twice before he marched into the jaws of the trap by applying to one of Lord Sandwich's underlings for a protection which would enable him to give a vote against the Government.<sup>11</sup>

All the advantages possessed by Lord North's candidate only gave point to the discovery that Lord North's Ministry had lost ground

<sup>10</sup> John Sykes's *Local Records*; Vol. I., pages 303, 304. Several Whig electioneering broadsides, relating to "The Newcastle *smuggled* Address, with the names of the *gentlemen* who signed it," are among the Blackett papers at Wallington.

<sup>11</sup> The certificate recorded the applicant's age, height, complexion, and dress; and then it went on to state that he had leave to attend the Election at Newcastle, (of which town he was a Freeman,) from the twenty-third of February 1777 to the third of March following; during which period he was not "to be molested or impressed." He did not need to be officially informed that his week on shore would be a time well worth living, and would cost him nothing.

since the war broke out. In October 1774 Sir Walter Blackett and Sir Matthew White Ridley,—though opposed by two local gentlemen of rank, birth, and reputation,—had been returned by a majority of two to one. In March 1777 Sir John Trevelyan just managed to defeat the least respectable individual who, (as far as any authoritative record goes,) ever aspired to sit in Parliament, by less than a hundred votes on a poll of considerably more than two thousand.<sup>12</sup> The independent electors of Newcastle-on-Tyne, (so a London newspaper triumphantly argued,) wounded in their conscience by the events which were passing in America, had very nearly snatched a miraculous victory, “in despite of the massy weight of a Corporation enjoying a revenue of sixteen thousand pounds a year, together with the interests of every peer, and every opulent landholder, in the neighbourhood.” The new member,—who had plenty of good sense, though he was no great speaker,—tacitly formed his own opinion about the chances of a second appeal to the constituency which he had so narrowly won. When the next general election came, Sir John stood, and was chosen, for Somersetshire.<sup>13</sup> Stoney Bowes became member for Newcastle; and,—at such times as he happened to be more afraid of meeting his Northern, than his Southern, creditors,—he went up to London, and voted against the war.

That war was marked by a feature unique in English history. Not

<sup>12</sup> The 1774 poll, as given in the Blackett MSS., stood thus:

Sir Walter Blackett, Bart., . . . . .	1432
Sir Matthew White Ridley, Bart., . . . . .	1411
The Hon. C. T. Phipps,. . . . .	795
Mr. William Delaval, . . . . .	677

In 1777 Sir John Trevelyan got 1163 votes, to 1068 which were polled for Mr. Stoney Bowes.

<sup>13</sup> Stoney Bowes made an ingenious use, during the contest, of his opponent’s connection with the South of England. “We hear that, in case of Sir John Trevelyan’s success in the present election, he has prepared cards of invitation to all free burgesses in his interest, to partake of an entertainment at his seat in *Somersetshire*, when the days are long, and the roads fit for travelling; and that Mr. Bowes has ordered 10 oxen, 30 sheep, and OCEANS of Newcastle Ale to be ready at his seat at Gibside, immediately after the election, where open house will be kept for some time on account of his late happy nuptials.”

Three thousand five hundred copies of that handbill were printed and distributed; for the Newcastle election was conducted by both parties with small regard to the Grenville Act. That celebrated law, as is the tendency with all ordinances against bribery, was already administered in a less Draconic spirit than at first. It came out on petition that any elector, who so chose, was hired as a messenger for Sir John Trevelyan. The witnesses, however, deposed that the payment which they received had no effect upon their action at the polls, “for their votes and interests had always been with that family;” and the Committee accepted the explanation as satisfactory.

a few officers of every grade, who were for the most part distinguished by valour and ability, flatly refused to serve against the colonists; and their scruples were respected by their countrymen in general, and by the King and his ministers as well. An example was set in the highest quarters. The sailor and the soldier who stood first in the public esteem were Augustus Keppel, Vice Admiral of the White, and Lieutenant General Sir Jeffrey Amherst. Keppel made it known that he was ready as ever to serve against a European enemy, but that, although professional employment was the dearest object of his life, he would not accept it "in the line of America." After that announcement was made, and to some degree on account of it, he enjoyed a great, and indeed an extravagant, popularity among all ranks of the Navy; and, when a European war broke out, he was promoted, and placed in command of the Channel Fleet. Amherst had absolutely declined to sail for New England in order to lead troops in the field. He withstood the expostulations and entreaties of his Sovereign, who in a personal interview, (as Dr. Johnson truly testified,<sup>14</sup>) was as fine a gentleman as the world could see; and who never was more persuasive and impressive than when condescending to request one of his subjects to undertake a public duty as a private favour to himself. The circumstance was not remembered to Amherst's disadvantage. He was retained as Commander-in-Chief of the forces; within the ensuing five years he became a peer, the Colonel of a regiment of Household Cavalry, and a full General in the army; and he died a Field-Marshal.

Amherst, although determined not to fight against the colonists, who had fought so well under him, was a political friend of the existing Administration; and, in the main, a supporter of their colonial policy. His course of action naturally enough commended itself to military men who were opposed to the Government, and who believed that the American question had been grievously mismanaged. Their views obtained expression in a statement made by a brother-soldier, whom of all others they would have chosen for their spokesman. Conway, like Amherst, terminated his career a Field-Marshal; but his most glorious and joyous years were those which he passed as aide-de-camp to the Duke of Cumberland in Flanders. The immediate vicinity of that intrepid prince, during a battle, was quite hot enough for most people, but not for Harry Conway. At Fontenoy the young fellow contrived, on his own account, to get hand to hand with two French grenadiers; and at Lauffeld he was within a finger's breadth of being killed in a

<sup>14</sup> Johnson's account of his conversation with George the Third in February 1767.

desperate scuffle with some French hussars. His courage, however, had seldom been so severely tested as when, in November 1775, he addressed the House of Commons on the limits of military obedience. That subject, (he said,) having been started in Parliament, it might look like an unworthy shrinking from the question if he did not say a few words to it. No struggle in the mind of a military man could be so dreadful as any doubt of this kind. There was a great difference between a foreign war, where the whole community was involved, and a domestic war on points of civil contention, where the community was divided. In the first case no officer ought to call in question the justice of his country; but, in the latter, a military man, before he drew his sword against his fellow-subjects, ought to ask himself whether the cause were just or no. Unless his mind was satisfied on that point, all emoluments,—nay, the sacrifice of what people in his situation held dearest, their honour,—would be nothing in the scale with his conscience. He, for his part, never could draw his sword in that cause.<sup>15</sup>

Those words were frank and weighty; but for the purposes of history the manner in which they were taken is far more important and significant than the words themselves. The influence of Conway upon politics rose steadily in the course of the coming years, throughout which his view of a soldier's obligations never wavered, and never was concealed. The candour and fairness of his character, (we are told,) drew much respect to him from all thinking and honest men.<sup>16</sup> In February 1782, during his country's dark hour, Conway recommended Parliament to terminate the contest with America,—a course which he had always thought to be the duty of England, and which many, who had long been deaf to duty, were beginning to contemplate as necessary to her interests. His proposition was rejected by a single vote on a division in which nearly four hundred members took part; and a few nights afterwards he induced a larger and a wiser House to condemn any further prosecution of the war by a majority of nineteen. Such a Resolution on such a subject,—carried against all the efforts and influence of a powerful Court, and of a Cabinet which to external appearance was unanimous,—is unprecedented in the annals of our Parliament, and perhaps in those of any national assembly. No more sincere and striking proof could possibly be given of the estimation in which Conway was held by his fellow-senators. They admired him

<sup>15</sup> Debate in the Commons on bringing in the American Prohibitory Bill. *Parliamentary History of England*; Vol. XVIII., page 998.

<sup>16</sup> Walpole's *Last Journals*; February 22, 1782.



none the less, and trusted him all the more, because, at the outbreak of the war, he had not shrunk from declaring himself on as abstruse a point of conduct as a soldier and a patriot was ever called upon to determine.

The same respectful and considerate treatment was very generally extended to other military and naval men whose personal action was governed by the same motives. Some left the service outright, and re-entered private life, with no diminution to such popularity, or social predominance, as they had hitherto enjoyed.<sup>17</sup> Some remained on half-pay until Great Britain was attacked by European enemies, when they promptly and joyfully placed their swords once more at the disposal of the Government. Others, again, accepted a commission in the militia; a post of unusual danger and importance at a moment when England, stripped bare of regular troops, had temporarily lost command of the sea in consequence of the scandalous improvidence of the Board at the head of which Lord Sandwich sate. Whatever course they adopted, their fidelity to principle appeared reasonable, and even laudable, to their countrymen of the middle and lower classes; and in their intercourse with equals they brought down upon themselves and their families no penalties whatsoever. The American war, from the outset to the finish, was an open question in English society. A general or colonel, who had refused to take a command against the colonists, lived comfortably and pleasantly with his country neighbours. The strong Tory politicians among them might grumble against him as fanciful or factious; but much harder things would have been said about him if he had shot foxes, or given a piece of ground for the site of a Nonconformist chapel.

<sup>17</sup> Such an one was Mr. Bosville of Thorpe Hall. That gentleman, after serving a campaign with Howe, had quitted the army because he would not act any longer against American Independence. Season after season he kept open house in town for Fox, and Grey, and Erskine, and Sheridan; nor for them only; for one of his constant guests was Lord Rawdon, than whom the Americans had no more stern and dreaded adversary in arms all the while that the war had lasted. Until he grew old, in order to avoid the daily trouble of entertaining at home, Bosville's board was spread at the Piazza Coffeehouse; where, when five o'clock came, two dozen frequently sate down to dine, and to dine well, even though only half a dozen had been expected. Whether the company was small or large, the host was king of it, or rather despot; and a despot of the kind which London needed then, and needs still. For dinner was served when the hour struck; and any one who came late knew that the only thing left for him was to go away, and dine elsewhere. The custom of proposing toasts and sentiments after the cloth was drawn,—destructive to conversation, and most depressing to the convivial happiness of the shy and the inarticulate,—was abolished at Bosville's table. See the *Life of General Sir Robert Wilson*; Volume I., chapter ii.

To the general public of our own day,—as indeed had always been the case with every well-read Englishman,—the name of Lord Chatham stands for patriotism. For he raised England, in a very few years, from distress and discredit to a brilliant and unquestioned pre-eminence; he made our Empire; and he expressed the national sentiment, which was ever present with him, in unusually apt and glowing language. Chatham gave his sons to his country. Great as were the pains which he bestowed upon the training of the second brother as an orator and a ruler, it was with equal ardour that he incited and encouraged the military studies of his eldest boy. Lord Pitt was sent into the army at fifteen. The father, who never was entirely happy unless he had all his family about him, felt the separation keenly;<sup>18</sup> and he was actuated by a sole view to the young man's usefulness in that profession which he regarded as not less honourable, and hardly less important, than the calling of a statesman. "My son's ambition," (so Lord Chatham informed the Governor of Canada in his stately manner,) "is to become a real officer; and I trust he already affixes to the appellation all the ideas that go to constitute a true title to the name." General Carleton learned with infinite satisfaction that the ex-minister,—who possessed so extensive and accurate a knowledge of the higher ranks on the British army-list,—wished his son to serve an apprenticeship on Carleton's staff, and had purchased him a pair of colours in the regiment of which Carleton was the Colonel.

The letter from which that extract is taken was dated in October 1773. In February 1776 Lady Chatham wrote to thank the Governor warmly, in her husband's name, for the favour and attention which Lord Pitt had received from his chief, in garrison and in the field. "Feeling all this, Sir," (so she proceeded,) "as Lord Chatham does, you will tell yourself with what concern he communicates to you a step that, from his fixed opinion with regard to the continuance of the unhappy war with our fellow-subjects of America, he has found it necessary to take. It is that of withdrawing his son from such a service." Two years afterwards, when the French war broke out, the family, (and who could blame them?) discovered a bright side to that great public calamity in the reflection that a son and brother could now return to the profession of arms with an easy conscience.<sup>19</sup> Lord

<sup>18</sup> "The time draws nigh for our dear Pitt joining his regiment at Quebec. What pain to part with him! And what satisfaction to see him go in so manly a manner, just in the age of pleasures!" Lord Chatham to Lady Stanhope; March 23, 1774.

<sup>19</sup> Letter from the younger William Pitt to the Countess of Chatham; March 19, 1778.

Pitt went back to the Service, and was appointed aide-de-camp to the Lieutenant-Governor of Gibraltar. He had not yet left England when Lord Chatham was struck down by death; but he sailed before the funeral, and handed over the post of chief mourner to his brother William. The House of Commons heard, with deep emotion, the noble words in which the dying man was said to have bidden his son honour a father's memory by responding on the instant to his country's call.<sup>20</sup> Lord Pitt was rewarded for his filial behaviour by the privilege of taking his share in that immortal defence of our Mediterranean citadel which did so much to restore the imperilled supremacy, and to salve the wounded pride, of England.

The Earl of Effingham was a regimental officer, in the spring of life,<sup>21</sup> and passionately attached to his vocation. At a moment when there was no fighting to be witnessed west of the Carpathians, he had joined the Russian army as a volunteer, and had gone through a campaign against the Turks with a name for conspicuous enterprise and valour.<sup>22</sup> He did not belong to the class of people who are prone to self-questioning, and inclined to crotchets of fanaticisms. A plain, rather rough, country squire, he lived according to the less ideal habits of his period and his order.<sup>23</sup> And yet when his regiment was told off for America, he threw up his commission, and, though far from a rich man, renounced the prospect of sure and quick advancement. In May 1775 he made his explanation in Parliament. His highest ambition, (so he told the House of Lords,) ever since he had any ambition at all, was to serve his country in a military capacity. If there was on earth an event which he dreaded, it was to see that country so situated as to make his profession incompatible with his obligations as a citizen; and such an event had now arrived. "When the duties," he said, "of a soldier and a citizen become inconsistent, I shall always think myself obliged to sink the character of the soldier in that of the citizen, till

<sup>20</sup> Speech of Lord Nugent; May 13, 1778. *Parliamentary History*; Vol. XIX., page 1227.

<sup>21</sup> In the Correspondence of the Marquis of Cornwallis, chapter i., Effingham is styled a Lieutenant General; but, according to Collins's *Peerage*, he was not thirty years old in 1775. A note to the *Parliamentary History* describes him as a captain; and that statement is borne out by the regimental lists preserved in the War Office. It was his father, the second Earl, who was a Lieutenant General.

<sup>22</sup> Lord Effingham's behaviour was specially marked in 1770, when almost the whole of the Turkish fleet was burned in a bay on the coast of Anatolia. It was the Sinope of that war.

<sup>23</sup> His lady hunted, and rode over five-barred gates. He himself liked his wine; and a summer-house on the estate had been christened Boston Castle,—not as a tribute to the American cause, but because no tea was ever drunk there.

such time as those duties shall again, by the malice of our *real* enemies, become united." Effingham sate down as soon as he had made this remarkable confession; but none of his brother peers, who were present, took exception to his speech; nor was he ever subsequently taunted with it in debate, although he was a frequent, a fiery, and a most provocative assailant of the Government. Outside Parliament, not in any way by his own seeking, he at once became celebrated, and vastly popular. Mason, the poet, inquired if ever there was anything, ancient or modern, either in sentiment or language, better than Lord Effingham's speech.<sup>24</sup> Public thanks were voted to him by the Corporations of London and Dublin. The Free Citizens of the Irish metropolis, many of them gentlemen of wealth and standing, and Protestants all, dined together and drank toasts to the Glorious and Immortal memory of the great King William; to Lord Chatham; to the brave General Carleton, the Man of too much Humanity for the purpose of a Cruel and Cowardly Minister; and to the Earl of Effingham, who did not forget the Citizen in the Soldier.

Lord Frederic Cavendish, (a name which is the synonym of loyalty,) had been a soldier from his youth onwards. At the outbreak of the Seven Years' War he had made a compact with three other promising officers,—Wolfe, Monckton, and Keppel,—not to marry until France was defeated, and finally brought to terms.<sup>25</sup> He was an aide-de-camp to the Duke of Cumberland in Germany, and during several campaigns he rode at the head of a brigade of infantry in the army of Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick. Already a Lieutenant General of repute when the American disturbances broke out, he still, at the age of five-and-forty, had the best of his career before him; but he allowed it to be known that he would not apply for a command against the colonists. Lord Frederic, however, continued in his profession; and in subsequent years he was made a full General by the Whigs, and a Field-Marshal by the Tories. Before it was ascertained that he declined to take part in the war, something disagreeable was written about him by a Mr. Falconer of Chester, who cannot be ranked as a very noteworthy critic. "The times assist the Americans. They are united by our divisions. Lord Frederic Cavendish is going to this service.

<sup>24</sup> Mason to Walpole; June 17, 1775.

<sup>25</sup> This account of Lord Frederic Cavendish is largely taken from the *Dictionary of National Biography*. The article allotted to Lord Frederic in that work recounts an anecdote about him and the Duc d'Aiguillon, which very pleasantly recalls the chivalrous relations existing, in time of war, between the nobles and gentlemen of France and of England.



If he acts consistently, he should turn to their side; for that family has been the best friends to Faction of every kind, and the most furious enemies to civil order.”<sup>26</sup> Burke, on the other hand, described the Cavendishes as men who were among the ornaments of the country in peace, and to whom the King owed some of the greatest glories of his own, and his predecessor’s reign, “in all the various services of the late French war.” Great integrity; great tenderness and sensibility of heart, with friendships few but unalterable; perfect disinterestedness; the ancient English reserve and simplicity of manner,—those, according to Edmund Burke, were the marks of a true Cavendish.<sup>27</sup> Such was the opinion held about the Devonshire family by one who assuredly knew them more intimately than ever did Mr. Falconer; and the one judgement may be weighed against the other.

Public attention had recently been strongly and favourably drawn to a man who was the forerunner of a class which, from that time to ours, has played an unostentatious and unrecompensed, but a most commanding, part in the history of moral and social progress. Effingham and Chatham, Conway and Cavendish, were peers and members of Parliament; but Granville Sharp, though not himself a senator, had the originality, the native strength, and the indefatigable enthusiasm of one whose behests, in the long run, senators are irresistibly compelled to obey. He had recently been invited to enter Holy Orders with the promise of a valuable living; but he put aside the offer on the ground that he could not satisfy himself concerning his qualifications for the function of a spiritual teacher.<sup>28</sup> Granville Sharp was one of the founders of the Bible Society; he learned Hebrew in hopes of converting a Jew, and Greek in order to refute a Socinian; and his criticisms upon the sacred texts were recommended to the attention of theological students by a Bishop. If he was not fit to be a clergyman, it is hard to see how the Church of England could have been manned. Nevertheless when Granville Sharp advanced, as an additional reason for declining to take orders, his belief that he could serve the cause of religion more effectually as a layman, there was much good sense in his decision. He was already deeply committed to a laborious, a rude, and a hazardous undertaking which, though it was inspired by

<sup>26</sup> Letter by Mr. Thomas Falconer, among the family papers of James Round, Esq., M.P.: *Historical Manuscripts Commission*, Fourteenth Report; Appendix, Part IX.

<sup>27</sup> Letter drafted by Burke in 1771. Burke’s *Character of Lord John Cavendish*.

<sup>28</sup> Letter to the Rev. Granville Wheler, Esq.: *Memoirs of Granville Sharp, Esq.*, by Prince Hoare; Part I., chapter i. The singular address which the envelope bore is explained in a note at the bottom of the page.

Christianity, could only be forced to a successful conclusion by a free use of carnal weapons. Between 1765 and 1772 he carried on a seven years' war of his own for the establishment and vindication of the doctrine that a slave is liberated by the act of setting his foot upon English ground. He had Lord Mansfield against him; until, by his undaunted pertinacity, he brought to his own opinion jury after jury, and at length the Bench itself. London then, and especially the lower districts on the Thames river, can hardly be said, in the modern sense of the word, to have been policed at all; and Granville Sharp stood in constant peril from the ruffians who were employed to re-capture runaways, or to kidnap negroes and negresses at the instigation of people who had not a title of claim to the ownership of their victims. His small patrimony was soon eaten up by law-costs, and by the expense of harbouring, clothing, and feeding the poor wretches whom he endeavoured to protect; but he contrived to support existence on his salary as a clerk in the Ordnance Department.

That slender resource failed him of a sudden. On the twenty-eighth of July, 1775, there occurs the following clumsily worded, though not ungrammatical, entry in Granville Sharp's diary: "Board at Westminster. Account in Gazette of the Battle at Charlestown, near Boston, and letters with large demands for ordnance stores, being received, which were ordered to be got with all expedition. I thought it right to declare my objections to the being any way concerned in that unnatural business." The chiefs of the department, both military and civil, behaved in a manner that did them honour; and their treatment of him, (as his biographer remarks,) was a specimen of the respectful kindness which the probity of Mr. Sharp's character attracted even from those who differed from him in opinion.<sup>29</sup> That difference was not very deeply marked in the case of the most conspicuous among Mr. Sharp's official superiors. Sir Jeffrey Amherst, who was at the head of the Ordnance, must have felt it a doubtful point whether he himself was justified in shipping gunpowder to America, when he could not find it with his conscience to go thither for the purpose of firing it off against the colonists. The Commissioners of Ordnance declined to accept Mr. Sharp's resignation. They gave him continuous leave of absence for nearly two years, by instalments of two months, and three months, and six months, at a time; and they would not accede to his urgent request that his salary should meanwhile be apportioned to the payment of the substitutes who did his work, so that the office might

<sup>29</sup> Prince Hoare's *Memoirs of Granville Sharp*; Part I., chapter vi.

incur no additional expense upon his account. But in the end he had his own way; as sooner or later he always had his way about everything. In 1777 his place was declared vacant; and at an age well past forty he was thrown penniless on a world where people, even less unworldly than Granville Sharp, find it difficult to make an income by new and untried methods after once they have turned the corner of life.

By the year 1775 something had been heard of a man who, in the course of a very long and honoured career, did as much in defence of our political freedom as Granville Sharp accomplished for the cause of humanity. John Cartwright, the younger son of a Nottinghamshire squire, entered the Royal Navy in 1758 at a late age for a midshipman. He soon made up for lost time, and attracted such notice by activity and intelligence, joined to a singularly amiable and chivalrous character, that Lord Howe took him on to his ship, the *Magnanime*, which then was reputed the best school for a rising officer. Cartwright became a prime favourite with his captain,—if such a word can fairly be applied in the case of a chief the degree of whose favour was invariably determined by merit. Howe, who knew every man in his crew and every corner of his vessel, contrived special arrangements to ensure that the young fellow should live with congenial comrades, and that he should enjoy all possible facilities, which the space and the routine of a man-of-war would permit, for learning the theory of his profession.<sup>30</sup> Cartwright, (as was likely to happen with Pitt for war minister, and Anson for First Lord of the Admiralty,) soon had a trial of that profession in its most practical and exciting shape. At the battle in Quiberon Bay he had the care of four guns on the lower deck; and, out of his twenty-six men, thirteen were swept down by one discharge. Lord Howe had the adversary's flag-ship, and two of her consorts, upon him at one and the same moment; and John Cartwright informed his friends at home that, more than once in the course of the engagement, he expected little less than to be diving for French cockles. When Howe was selected by Hawke to lead an attack

<sup>30</sup> Until the rules of spotless cleanliness and careful stowage, which were initiated by Lord St. Vincent and perfected by Lord Nelson, had been established throughout the British navy, a seventy-four gun ship, with her six hundred men between decks, was neither an abode of comfort, nor the place for quiet and uninterrupted studies. Dr. Johnson, whose standard of tidiness was not exacting, often quoted his stay on board a ship of war in Plymouth Sound as an experience which reconciled him to any, and all, the drawbacks incidental to life on shore. "When you look down," he said, "from the quarter-deck to the space below, you see the utmost extremity of human misery; such crowding, such filth, such stench."

on those ships of the enemy which had run for safety into the Vilaine river, Cartwright was one of the three officers who accompanied his Lordship in the boats. The *Magnanime* was kept at sea for the best part of two busy years, until the crew had to be at the pumps during the whole of every watch. At length Howe surrendered the command, and was succeeded by a very different kind of officer;<sup>31</sup> and the single thought of the young lieutenant was henceforward to attain such a proficiency in seamanship as would render him worthy of his luck if ever the day came for him to sail with Howe once more.<sup>32</sup>

That day arrived at last; and a sad day it was for John Cartwright. In February 1776 Lord Howe was appointed to the American station; and he forthwith invited Cartwright to call at his house in Grafton Street, and earnestly pressed him to embark on board the flag-ship.<sup>33</sup> Cartwright, too deeply moved to argue with a patron whom he almost worshipped, intimated that he was unable to accept the offer, and placed in the Admiral's hands a letter which explained the reason of his decision; and Lord Howe in reply acknowledged, mournfully enough, that opinions in politics, on points of such national moment as the differences subsisting between England and America, should be treated like opinions in religion, wherein everyone was at liberty to regulate his conduct by those ideas which he had adopted upon due reflection and enquiry.<sup>34</sup> Cartwright continued to reside in his native county, respected and loved by young and old. He was known in the hunting-field for a fine horseman, who rode with the courage of a sailor; and he passed in the Militia for a most just and kind, but a very strict, officer, who made his battalion, which had been much neglected, into an example for discipline and organisation. His value was recognised, and his friendship sought, by the General in command of the district,—the Lord Percy who helped to win the day at Fort Washington, and who saved as much of it as could be saved at Lexington.

<sup>31</sup> It would be more profitable, (so Cartwright declared,) to be taken prisoner for a few months, and to have the advantage of learning to fence and talk French, than to serve under a captain who lingered about wherever he could get fresh meat and syllabubs, and who missed opportunities for a fight "the loss of which would make a parson swear."

<sup>32</sup> *Life and Correspondence of Major Cartwright*: London, 1826; Vol. I., pages 8 to 29.

<sup>33</sup> Cartwright was well aware of the chance which he was losing. Lord Howe, (so he told his friends,) now commanded more ships than had ever fallen to the lot of one man since the defeat of the Spanish Armada, so that it would be "the fairest field for rapid promotion that could possibly be imagined."

<sup>34</sup> *Life and Correspondence of Major Cartwright*: Vol. I., pages 72 to 81.



About a twelvemonth after he had refused to serve against the colonists, Major Cartwright received the freedom of the town of Nottingham; a significant indication of the views prevailing in a community which had the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Army in America for a parliamentary representative.<sup>35</sup>

It has happened again and again that, when a nation is engaged in serious hostilities, the partisans of peace have been exposed to humiliating, and sometimes very unmerciful, treatment from outbreaks of popular violence. But opponents of the American war had in this respect very little to complain about, if we may judge by the noise made over some very mild instances of persecution which were loudly advertised, and vociferously rebuked, by the chorus of Whig journalists. After the battle of Long Island, (so their story went,) preparations had been made to illuminate Manchester whenever the tidings arrived that New York was taken. One of the citizens put out a notice that he, for his part, had no intention of joining in the demonstration; and that, if his windows were broken, informations would be lodged against the offenders. Thereupon a certain Reverend Doctor was said to have transmitted a copy of the notice to one of the Secretaries of State, with the expectation that "the writer would be immured in Newgate, and that he himself would be complimented with the first vacant Bishopric;" neither of which consequences, so far as history records, came to pass. Again, it was alleged by the Opposition newspapers that the Jacobites in the town of Derby, who toasted the Stuarts kneeling, had celebrated the successes of the Royal Army in America with a banquet where they drank confusion to the Whig corporation; and the ministerialists of Taunton were accused of having taken a liberty with the Parish Church by ringing the bells in honour of Howe's victory on the Brandywine. When such trumperry occurrences were minutely narrated, and solemnly adduced against the Tories as proofs of insolence and outrage, their political adversaries must have been very hard put to it in order to find a real grievance; and it must have been seldom indeed that any friend of America, in any city of England, was harshly

<sup>35</sup> Among the officers who objected to serve in America some, as may well be conceived, failed to express their disinclination in terms which satisfied the taste of a military superior. "For the safety of the Service I must recommend that Major Norris, of the 27th Regiment, may have leave to sell. He came to me, and found fault with this most just and necessary war his Majesty is obliged to make against his rebellious subjects. When I would have interrupted him, he thundered out a hundred Greek lines from Homer. He then talked to me out of Plutarch's Lives. In brief, my Lord, he convinced me that he will be better out of the King's service than in it." General Irwin to Earl Harcourt, September 1, 1775.

or disrespectfully used by those among his neighbours who belonged to the war party.

The story of a disturbance, which took place on the reception of the news of Lexington, rather tends to suggest that the idler and less responsible section of our population was in sympathy with the colonists. On an evening in August 1775, a party of scapegraces smashed the lamps at Vauxhall; pulled the door of the Rotunda off its hinges; stormed the Throne of Orpheus, and ejected the musicians who occupied it; and chased out of the gardens the whole staff of the establishment, together with all the constables, calling out that they themselves were the Provincials beating the Regulars. That, for some years to come, was the only riot in which civilians were concerned. On other occasions the most effective violators of public order appear to have been subalterns in the army. At Lincoln Lieutenant Macintosh, of the Sixty-ninth Regiment, entered a printshop, took from the window a picture of General Putnam, tore it in pieces, and then paid for it across the counter. Soon afterwards Macintosh came back again, destroyed another picture without giving compensation, and swore that next time he would run his sword through the panes of the shopfront. On the Monday following some other officers, (mistaking for an enemy one who, in effect, if not in intention, was among England's most serviceable allies,) cut the head out of an engraving of General Charles Lee, and threatened that, if the tradesman did not mend his ways, the soldiers should be ordered to pull down his house.

The proceeding was a boyish ebullition of military loyalty, pardonable in the eyes of any fair man who himself had worn a uniform when he was one-and-twenty; but Whig scribes, who saw deep into every milestone on the road from Edinburgh to London, cited it as a proof that a Scotchman might insult English citizens with impunity. If officers, (it was said,) had behaved with such turbulence and want of breeding in the good old King's reign, they would have been broke, or, at the least, would have received a public reprimand at the head of the regiment; but now, with Lord Bute behind the Throne, no colonel in the army would dare to censure a lieutenant whose name showed that he came from Inverness. These enormities, (as the Opposition journalist styled them,) afforded so many additional indications that the "only path to preferment was by trampling upon law, and turning into ridicule the rights and privileges of the people." It undoubtedly was the right and privilege of a shopkeeper to exhibit the portraits of American generals as popular heroes; but it was a right

which he would have been very cautious indeed of exercising if any large proportion of his neighbours had been ardent supporters of the war. That such, however, was the case either in the town of Lincoln, or generally throughout England, is disproved by certain considerations the significance of which it is not easy to deny.

In time of war a political agitation,—especially one that is aimed against institutions and abuses on the continuance of which the supremacy of the party in power depends,—is almost certainly doomed to languish and to fail; and that such an agitation should be too insignificant for serious notice may well be the best thing which could happen for its promoters. During the great war with France, towards the close of the eighteenth century, the bolder advocates of parliamentary reform were sometimes rabbled by mobs, and sometimes punished in the law-courts with exemplary severity; whereas twenty years previously, all the while that our armies were fighting Washington in America, the art of Constitutional agitation at home was brought to a perfection, and pursued with an amount of success, surpassing anything which had ever been known before. A combined movement,—directed towards the improvement of our electoral system, and the extinction of those manifold facilities for corruption by which the Court kept in awe the Cabinet, and the Cabinet controlled the Parliament,—ran its course with growing velocity; and neither the Government at Whitehall, nor its adherents throughout the country, endeavoured to repress that movement either by penal legislation or by lawless violence. There were open meetings of Freeholders in the shires, and of Freemen in the cities; County Associations for the redress of grievances; Committees of Correspondence which maintained uniform and concerted action among reformers all through the kingdom; and public dinners with toasts so bravely worded as to ring like the challenge of a trumpet, and so numerous, when drunk in bumpers, as effectually to drown every vestige of caution and timidity. That such methods, without entailing any disagreeable consequences on those who employed them, should have been put in practice against a Ministry which was engaged in the conduct of an important war, is an indirect, but a most material, proof that the war itself was disliked by the nation.

The direct evidence is stronger yet; for at many County meetings there was a Resolution, at most banquets a whole string of flowery Sentiments, and prominent in every Petition and Address an emphatic paragraph, all of which denoted friendliness towards America, and

exhaled hearty aspirations for an immediate Peace. At length, in December 1781, the Liverymen of London, in public assembly duly convoked, took action which has been so forcibly narrated by a contemporary historian that it is well to reproduce his description, italics and all. "They besought the King to remove both his public and *private* counsellors, and used these stunning and memorable words: '*Your armies are captured; the wonted superiority of your navies is annihilated; your dominions are lost.*'" These words, (so the writer proceeded,) could have been used to no other king: "for no king had lost so much, without losing all. If James the Second lost his crown, yet the Crown lost no dominions."<sup>36</sup> The Address from the Livery was never presented; but the last had not yet been heard of it; for a week afterwards, in Westminster Hall, a similar petition was proposed by Charles Fox, and adopted by a vast concourse of Westminster electors. The Footguards were held in readiness for the protection of Downing Street against a possible incursion of the Opposition mob, and not at all from an apprehension lest the war-party should invade the Hall, and attempt to break the heads of the peace-party. Experience had often shown that there was no ground for anticipating any such contingency. Anti-war meetings always passed off quietly between 1776 and 1782; although there is no reason to suppose that our ancestors were more tolerant, or better-mannered, than their descendants. The Wilkes riots, and the Keppel riots, conclusively demonstrated what Londoners of the period were capable of doing for the promotion of disorder whenever they had a mind that way. There exists one tenable theory, and one only, to account for the tranquillity and security amid which those, who opposed the Government on the question of America, were able to carry forward their political operations. The rational explanation is that the disfavour beneath which, from other causes, the Ministry had long and deservedly laboured, instead of being diminished, was confirmed and aggravated by the war.

<sup>36</sup> *Last Journals*; December 4, 1781.



## CHAPTER X

### THE TALK OF MEN. CONTEMPORARY HISTORIANS. THE PAMPHLETEERS. THE "CALM ADDRESS"

AN Englishman who approved the war was quite willing that Englishmen who disliked it should be at full liberty to express their opinions; but he had no inclination whatever to conceal his own. The printed memoirs of the period are sprinkled thickly with scraps of many conversations; and brief selections from the familiar utterances of famous men have been deliberately reported for the amusement and enlightenment of future ages. From these sources it is possible to catch at least an echo of the bluff jolly talk which flowed round the tables of country houses, while the Gainsboroughs and Romneys, with their colours still fresh, looked down upon the company from the panelling of the walls. The disputants on either side met in a fair field and on equal terms, and handled the fiery topics of the war as unreservedly as their grandsons in the days of Peel argued about the Corn Laws. A gentleman in the Western Counties complained that the Dissenters, who in that part of the world were "as thick as mushrooms," not contented with the unmolested enjoyment of their own mode of worship, mixed themselves up with State affairs, and presumed to sit in judgment on the American policy of the Government; but, in spite of his disgust, could not escape from hearing all that the Dissenters had to say.<sup>1</sup> A Loyalist refugee from New England who, for want of something better to occupy him, spent much of his time in public places, described to a friend at Boston the sort of talk which went on around him in London. "America," he wrote, "furnishes matter for dispute in coffee-houses; sometimes warm, but without abuse or ill-nature; and there it ends. It is unfashionable, and even disreputable, to look askew on one another for difference of opinion in political matters. The doc-

<sup>1</sup> Letter from a Gentleman in Somersetshire to a Friend in London; October 6, 1776.

trine of toleration, if not better understood, is, thank God, better practised here than in America.”<sup>2</sup>

During the earlier years of the American conflict people wrangled about colonial politics for the pleasure of unburdening their own souls, and of hearing vigorous epithets, and well-worn taunts, sounded forth by their own voices; for they had little expectation of converting an adversary. Starting from directly opposite premises, they entered the lists armed respectively with an entirely different equipment of facts. Each man retailed what he found in his favourite newspaper; and the newspaper which was Gospel for the one seemed a magazine of mendacity to the other. Whigs proclaimed their distrust of every statement in the “London Gazette,” and their belief in many items of intelligence which they could not find in its pages. Tories as roundly asserted that Congress had bought the entire Opposition press through the agency of Arthur Lee;—a Virginian, (so they described him,) who had been bred a physician, but had turned lawyer, and now was finishing as a rebel.<sup>3</sup> Horace Walpole, with the impartiality of one who accepted nothing for truth but what he read in a private letter, said that it was incredible how both sides lied about the war.<sup>4</sup> The distance from the scene of action, and the uncertainty of communication by sailing vessels, gave unbounded scope to the audacity of any London penman who seasoned, and served up, contemporary military history in a form to suit his reader’s palate. And so it came to pass that, when they were debating the events of the current campaign, men of contrary parties were seldom agreed as to the direction in which things were moving; although everybody admitted that they moved very slowly.<sup>5</sup> Our ancestors were vehement in assertion, and not over choice in repartee; but there was a point in most controversies when discord and contradiction ceased, and an appeal was made to the ordeal of the wager. Fifty guineas even, that the war would terminate before Christmas 1779 without America being independent of the Crown of Great Britain; thirty guineas to ten that Sir William Howe was not in pos-

<sup>2</sup> *Journal and Letters of the late Samuel Curwen*, Edited by George Atkinson Ward; New York, 1845.

<sup>3</sup> Letter of 9th August, 1775; Round MSS.

<sup>4</sup> Walpole to Sir Horace Mann; August 11, 1776.

<sup>5</sup> “Don’t you begin to think, Madam, that it is pleasanter to read history than to live it? Battles are fought, and towns taken, in every page; but a campaign takes six or seven months to hear, and achieves no great matter at last. I dare to say Alexander seemed to the coffee-houses of Pella a monstrous while about conquering the world. As to this American war, I am persuaded it will last till the end of the century.” Walpole to the Countess of Ossory; Strawberry Hill, October 8, 1777.

session of Philadelphia by June 1777; twenty-five guineas for every three months that France remained at peace with England from the first of March 1779 onwards; and a bet of fifty guineas, to run for three years, that Lord North died by the hand of justice before Mr. Hancock, the President of the Continental Congress;—those are a few authentic specimens of a characteristic national practice, the resort to which, at the critical moment in a dispute, restored the harmony of many a social evening, and averted the necessity of a hostile meeting at some dismally early hour on the morning of the morrow.

Many wars have ere this been waged, not by England only, in pursuit of inadequate and illusory ends, and have been carried on long after the course of events had made it manifest that those ends were impossible of attainment. Wars of that class are the despair of historians belonging to the school which would fain account for every great national undertaking by a theory that the people,—instinctively, even if ignorantly and unconsciously,—are impelled by an unerring sense of the national interests. Such wars are commenced in anger, and afterwards continued from obstinacy, or, it may be, from the necessities of self-preservation; and the actual explosion generally follows close upon some striking and theatrical occurrence which evokes an eruption of moral indignation and international repugnance. In 1793 the execution of Louis the Sixteenth was a signal for the clash of arms; and the spilling of the tea in Boston Harbour had, not less certainly, been the exciting cause of that protracted struggle which finally resulted in the independence of America. It will always be remembered to the credit of Pitt and Grenville that, under the shock of the French Revolution, they laboured gallantly, honestly, and perseveringly to maintain peace between France and England. All the while that Burke was preaching a crusade against the wicked Republic with a fury of rhetoric which took the conscience of our country by storm, the Prime Minister, and the Foreign Minister, insisted that the counsels of moderation should be heard, and kept their followers in hand as long as it was possible to hold them.<sup>6</sup> But, throughout our American troubles,

<sup>6</sup> “No hour of Pitt’s life,” (wrote Mr. Green in his *History of the English People*,) “is so great as the hour when he stood, lonely and passionless, before the growth of national passion, and refused to bow to the gathering cry for war.”

“I bless God that we had the wit to keep ourselves out of the glorious enterprise of the combined armies, and that we were not tempted by the hope of sharing the spoils in the division of France, nor by the prospect of crushing all democratical principles all over the world at one blow.” That was said by Lord Grenville as late as November 1792; two full years after Burke had thrilled England by his celebrated appeal to Chivalry on behalf of Queen Marie Antoinette.

the rulers of the British Empire exerted upon public opinion an exasperating, and not a restraining, influence. Even in the business letters which he addressed to Lord North the King could never write about New Englanders with patience. Lord Dartmouth, indeed, treated the colonists with sympathy, and evinced a desire to ascertain and understand their own view of their own case; but in that regard he was almost alone in the Cabinet. After the quarrel had become envenomed, few members of the Government, whose words counted for anything, spoke of Americans in Parliament with respect, or even with common propriety.

The cue was given, and the fashion set, to all partisans of the Court and the Ministry. Their talk, (so much as has reached us,) ran in a channel of considerable violence, but of little depth. How far reconciliation was practicable; by what steps, and through the employment of what agents and intermediaries, it might be achieved; what was the judgement of contemporary Europe; what were the schemes and inclinations of foreign governments, and what would be their action if the war was indefinitely prolonged; how that war affected the prosperity of our own West Indian islands; whether America could be subdued by force; how long, if reconquered, she could be kept in subjection, and at what cost;—those were speculations altogether too abstract and unpractical to engage the attention of Lord North's supporters. The staple of their conversation, even in the case of men who posed as authorities on the colonial question, consisted in wholesale and vehement abuse of the disaffected colonists. James Boswell, though a sound Tory, entertained scruples about the right of Parliament to tax America. Like a good disciple he begged, and again begged, Doctor Johnson to clear up his misgivings; but on each occasion he was handled in such a fashion as to regret, (which was most unusual with him,) that he had not been discreet enough to leave burning topics alone. Once, however, he enjoyed the opportunity of listening to the famous teacher at a moment when his mind had been attuned to milder and holier thoughts. Johnson was maintaining, in opposition to a handsome and eloquent Quakeress, that friendship could not strictly be called a Christian virtue. He urged that, whereas the ancient philosophers dwelt only on the beauty of private friendship, Christianity recommended universal benevolence, and enjoined us to consider all men as our brothers. "Surely, Madam," he said, "your sect must approve of this; for you call all men *friends*." But that weather was too calm to last. "From this pleasing subject," wrote Boswell, "he made a



sudden transition. 'I am willing,' he cried, 'to love all mankind except an American;' and his inflammable corruption bursting into horrid fire, he breathed out threatenings and slaughter, calling them rascals, robbers, pirates, and exclaiming that he would burn and destroy them."<sup>7</sup>

Considering that he was a professed master in the science of ethics, Dr. Johnson's estimate of the American character was not very judicial or discriminating; and still less could it be expected that people, who had never claimed to be philosophers, should mince their words when they were engaged in denouncing the iniquities of the colonists. That mattered little in a discussion with English Whigs, who gave as good as they got, and who were much more concerned to speak their mind against the Cabinet than to defend the Americans. But there was a class of men whose feelings were cruelly wounded by the tone of conversation which largely prevailed in London society; men whom it is impossible to name without a tribute of respectful compassion. The town was full of refugees from every colony in America, who had sacrificed all that they possessed to their love for Britain, and their veneration for Britain's King. Their condition, sad in itself, was melancholy indeed by contrast to that which they had known at home. Some of them had been proprietors of vast districts, with powers and prerogatives far exceeding those of an English landowner. Others had held office as Lieutenant-Governors of Provinces, Judges, Councillors, and Commissioners of Revenue. Others, again, had been Presidents of Colleges, or clergymen in charge of rich, and once admiring and affectionate, congregations. Among the five occupants of the Bench in the superior Court of Massachusetts all save one were Loyalists; and three of them were driven into banishment. The political faith for which these gentlemen suffered is finely summarised in the epitaph on Chief Justice Oliver, the president of their tribunal, which may be seen in St. Philip's, Birmingham;—a church standing in the very centre of the city, with an ample space about it, and its doors hospitably open to the passing stranger.<sup>8</sup> One of Oliver's colleagues died in Nova Scotia, and another in England; and at least five members of his family, who were

<sup>7</sup> *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, Sept. 23, 1777; April 15, and 18, 1778.

<sup>8</sup> The monument is erected to the Honourable Peter Oliver, formerly His Majesty's Chief Justice of the Province of Massachusetts Bay in New England; and the inscription runs: "In the year 1776, on a Dissolution of Government, He left his Native Country; but in all the consequent calamities his Magnanimity remained unshaken, and, (though the source of his misfortunes,) nothing could dissolve his Attachment to the British Government, nor lessen his love and loyalty to his Sovereign."

living in Massachusetts as grown men before the Revolution broke out, are buried in different corners of our island. When General De Lancey of New York was laid in his grave a fellow-refugee said, truly enough, that there would be scarcely a village in England without some American dust in it by the time they were all at rest. And not in England only; for, in the course of our wars against the French Republic and the French Empire, many American Loyalists, both of the first and second generation, breathed their last on the field of honour in one or another of our country's battles.<sup>9</sup>

When Governor Hutchinson of Massachusetts was superseded in June 1774, many leading merchants, and most of the officials, united to present him with an Address approving his political conduct, and wishing him a prosperous future. Among the names attached to the paper was that of Samuel Curwen of Salem, Judge of the Admiralty for the province. Popular pressure was brought upon the subscribers for the purpose of inducing them to withdraw their signatures, and to insert in the newspapers an apology for the action which they had taken. Many yielded; but Curwen thought it best to go elsewhere in search of that security, and those personal rights, which, (to use his own words,) by the laws of God he ought to have enjoyed undisturbed in his native town. His wife, not a little to his surprise, disliked a sea voyage more than she feared the Sons of Liberty; and, in his sixtieth year, he sailed alone for England. He solaced his leisure in that country by the composition of a journal which presents, in subdued but distinct colours, a very cheerless picture of the exile's existence.

The misery of such an existence has been sung and spoken in many languages, by famous people of many nations; but it has never been more irksome than to men of our own busy and energetic race. Among those men, the New England refugees belonged precisely to the class upon whom the trials and discomforts of banishment pressed the heaviest. In America they had been important personages, successful al-

<sup>9</sup> "Mr. Flucker died suddenly in his bed yesterday morning, and it is the forty-fifth of the refugees from Massachusetts, within my knowledge, that have died in England. He was Secretary of State for Massachusetts." Curwen's diary; Feb. 17, 1783.

Wellington's Quartermaster General, who was killed at Waterloo, was a De Lancey of New York. Colonel James De Peyster, of the same province, had, as a youth, distinguished himself on the British side during the war of the American Revolution. In 1793 he led an assault on an almost impregnable French position at Lincelles in West Flanders, and was shot dead in the moment of victory. Those were two out of many; for Loyalists of the upper class were a fighting race throughout all the colonies. Tory farmers and shopkeepers, and Tory mechanics, in the Northern and Central provinces, showed much less inclination to take up arms for their opinions.

ready, or on a sure and easy road to success; wealthy according to the standard of the community in which they resided; and with every day of their life filled and dignified by serious occupations. But in England they were nobodies, with nothing in the world to do. It is true that the sights of London were there to be admired, if only they had the heart to relish them. They attended as spectators at numerous processions characteristic of the period and the country. They saw their Majesties returning from a Drawing-room in sedan-chairs; the King in very light cloth, with silver buttons, and the Queen in lemon-coloured flowered silk on cream-coloured ground. They saw the milkmaids and chimney-sweeps keep May-day in all its ancient splendour, with many hundred pounds' worth of silver plate disposed amid an enormous pyramid of foliage and garlands. They watched five couple of young persons chained together, walking under the care of tip-staves to Bride-well. They visited the British Museum, and examined the Alexandrine Manuscript. Readers of Shakespeare, like all of their countrymen who read anything, they made an expedition to the Boar's Head tavern in the City for the sake of Falstaff, and in Hertfordshire in order to inspect the great Bed of Ware.<sup>10</sup> They heard blind Sir John Fielding administer justice at Bow Street. They were present when the Reverend Doctor Dodd, at the Magdalen Hospital, delivered a discourse which set the whole chapel crying, not much more than a twelve-month before he preached his own Condemned Sermon in Newgate gaol. They saw Garrick in tragedy; and were crushed, and buffeted, and almost stifled, for the space of two hours at the Pit door of Drury Lane theatre in a vain attempt to see him in comedy. They dined with the ex-Governor of Massachusetts, and met each other; and with the ex-Attorney General, and met each other again. They sought distraction in the provinces, and made a round of manufacturing towns, and cathedrals, and feudal castles, and romantic prospects. They explored Blenheim, and Old Sarum, and Stonehenge, and the inn at Upton where Tom Jones found Sophia Western's muff with the little paper pinned to it. But all was to no purpose. After eighteen months spent in surveying the wonders and beauties of the mother country with sad and weary eyes, Judge Curwen pronounced, as the conclusion of the whole matter, that his flight to England had been a dreadful and irreparable mistake. The tyranny of an unruly rabble, when endured beneath a man's own roof, with a plentiful purse and all his

<sup>10</sup> *Twelfth Night*; Act IV., Scene 2.

friends around him, was, (he confessed,) an enviable fate compared to liberty under the mildest government on earth, when accompanied by poverty, with its horrid train of evils.<sup>11</sup>

The American exiles, with very few exceptions, were bitterly poor.<sup>12</sup> Curwen found London "a sad lickpenny," where the vital air could not be breathed unless at great expense. Everything was ruinously dear,—the lodging; the food; the wine, without the production of which no business could be transacted, and no visitor honoured; and, above all, the fuel. In January 1776 there came a cold Sunday, when the Thames bore, and the mercury stood at eight degrees below zero. "The fires here," Curwen wrote, "are not to be compared to our large American ones of oak and walnut. Would that I was away!" Numerous applications to the Treasury by Loyalists, who had stronger claims than his, excluded him from the most distant hope of relief. To beg from chance acquaintance was humiliating, "and to starve was stupid;" and so,—with a mild stroke of sarcasm against Seneca and the long list of moralists, heathen and Christian, who wrote most edifying treatises on the duty of contentment and resignation, but had never known what it was to want a meal,—he went into a cheap and dull retirement at Exeter, where he kept body and soul together on something less than half a guinea a week.<sup>13</sup> John Wentworth, who had been formerly Governor of New Hampshire, resided in Europe all through the Revolution. He was received with exceptional favour by the Ministry and by the King; and yet he esteemed the lot of an exile, at the very best, to be all but intolerable. When the war was over, he thought himself bound to give the benefit of his experience to those unhappy Loyalists who still lingered on their native soil, stripped of all their property, and exposed to the insults of triumphant and unforgiving adversaries. However distressing might be their plight, he earnestly recommended no one to seek a refuge in England who could get clams and potatoes in America. "My destination," he added, "is quite uncertain. Like an old flapped hat, thrown off the top of a house, I am

<sup>11</sup> Samuel Curwen to the Hon. Judge Sewall; Exeter, Jan. 19, 1777.

<sup>12</sup> One of these exceptions was Charles Stuart, a rich tobacco-merchant of Norfolk in Virginia. Stuart, contrary to all intention of his own, did a memorable service to liberty; for he brought with him from America the negro Somerset, whose name will always recall Lord Mansfield's declaration of the principle that our free soil makes a free man.

<sup>13</sup> Letters to the Rev<sup>d</sup> Isaac Smith, June 6, 1776; to Dr. Charles Russell of Antigua, June 10, 1776; and to the Hon. Judge Sewall, Dec. 31, 1776.



tumbling over and over in the air, and God only knows where I shall finally alight and settle.”<sup>14</sup>

The affection of the Massachusetts Loyalists for the chief town of their province grew with absence, and only ceased at death. A distinguished Nova Scotia statesman, the son of a refugee, has given a pleasant and spirited account of his father's unalterable attachment to the city of his birth, which had cast him out. In 1775 John Howe, who then was just of age, had served his apprenticeship as a printer, and, like a true young American, was already engaged to be married; and yet “he left all his household goods and gods behind him, carrying away nothing but his principles, and his pretty girl.”<sup>15</sup> He settled at Halifax and prospered. Though a true Briton, he made no shame of loving Boston with a filial regard. While the conflict between England and the revolted colonies was still at its height, John Howe did every kindness in his power to American prisoners of war, if only they were Boston men; and, far into the nineteenth century, whenever he was in poor health, his family, as an infallible remedy, shipped the old fellow off southwards to get a walk on Boston Common. Wherever a banished New Englander wandered, and whatever he saw, his model of excellence, and his standard for comparison, was always the capital of Massachusetts. At Exeter, according to Judge Curwen's calculation, the inhabitants were seven-eighths as numerous as at Boston; but the city was not so elegantly built, and stood on much less ground. Birmingham, in its general appearance, looked more like Boston, to his eyes, than any other place in England. There was something very pathetic in the feeling with which the exiles regarded the home where they never again might dwell. Awake, or in dreams, their thoughts were for ever recurring to old Boston days; they tried to believe that a more or less distant future would bring those good times back for themselves and their families; and they industriously collected every

<sup>14</sup> Sabine's *Loyalists*; Vol. I., page 322, and Vol. II., page 10. In the *American Archives* there is a letter addressed by Thomas Oliver to a friend who had escaped from Boston to Nova Scotia. “Happy am I,” (Oliver wrote from London,) “that you did not leave Halifax to encounter the expenses of this extravagant place. Every article of expense is increased fourfold since you knew it. What the poor people will do, who have steered their course this way, I cannot tell. I found Mrs. Oliver well, and settled in a snug little house at Brompton, in the neighbourhood of London; but I shall continue here no longer than I am able to find an economical retreat. I have no time to look about me as yet. Some cheaper part of England must be the object of my enquiry.”

<sup>15</sup> The words are quoted from a speech delivered by the Honourable Joseph Howe in Faneuil Hall, Boston, on the Fourth of July, 1858. Joseph Howe was Secretary of the Province, and leader of the Liberal party, in Nova Scotia.

scrap of news which came by letter from a town where their places had already been filled by others, and their names were by-words. Assailed by the fierce and implacable hostility of their own fellow-citizens, and treated too often with contemptuous indifference in England, they tasted the force of that verse in the Book of Proverbs which says: "The brethren of the poor do hate him. How much more do his friends go far from him! He pursueth them with words, but they are wanting unto him."

For, in one important particular, a painful disillusion awaited the exiles at their arrival on our shores. They had anticipated the enjoyment of much rational and sympathetic intercourse with the most select and the best of company. In their own country,—since the troubles began, and the Stamp Act, and afterwards the Tea-duty, had been to the fore in every conversation,—they had been alarmed by the spread of Republicanism, and infinitely disgusted by the manners of some who promulgated that novel and hated creed. The father of Mrs. Grant of Laggan, for instance, had acquired a large property in Vermont, which he called by the name of Clarendon, and liked to describe as a Baronial estate. But social tendencies in New England, (if ever they had taken that direction,) now altogether ceased to point towards the formation of an aristocracy. "My father," wrote Mrs. Grant, "grew fonder than ever of fishing and shooting, because birds and fish did not talk of tyranny and taxes. Sometimes we were refreshed by the visit of friends who spoke respectfully of our dear King and dearer country; but they were soon succeeded by some Obadiah, or Zephaniah, from Hampshire or Connecticut, who came in without knocking, sate down without invitation, lighted his pipe without ceremony, and began a discourse on politics that would have done honour to Praise God Barebones."<sup>16</sup> In contrast to all that seemed vulgar and offensive to them in America, the emigrants had beguiled themselves with an ideal picture of the welcome which they would receive from the refined society of England. A writer unequalled in his acquaintance with the surface aspects of the Revolution, and not less observant of the inward causes which then governed the ebb and flow of political opinion, has remarked that a prodigious obstacle to the Whig cause in the colonies was the worldly prestige, "the purple dignity, the aris-

<sup>16</sup> In order to escape this infliction, the Lord of the Manor of Clarendon retreated to his native Scotland in the summer of 1770; and, before very long, every acre that he left behind him in America had been confiscated.

tocratic flavour," of the Tory side of the question.<sup>17</sup> To live familiarly amid such associations, to be at home in such circles, to be recognised as the martyrs of loyalty within the very precincts of the shrine where the object of their worship dwelt,—such privileges would go far to compensate the expatriated Loyalists for all that they had endured and sacrificed.

Their disappointment was in proportion to their expectations. They found the upper class of Great Britain absorbed in its own affairs, and intent upon pleasures most uncongenial to a plain and frugal American on account of the money they cost, the amount of time they consumed, and the scandal which not unfrequently attended them. In 1790 the French emigrants, who sought sanctuary across the British Channel, experienced much comfort and advantage from the fraternity which had long existed between the nobility of France and of England; but in 1775 the knowledge that a stranger came from Boston,—whether of his own accord, or because he could not help it,—was a poor introduction to the good graces of Almack's, of Newmarket, and of Ranelagh. The Bostonian habit of mind, according to the language then in vogue, was marked by "the low cunning of a petty commercial people;" and the mere circumstance that a citizen of the obnoxious town was a Tory, instead of a Whig, did not exempt him from the social consequences of that sweeping criticism. A ghost at a banquet was hardly more out of place than a sober and melancholy New Englander in a St. James's Street Club. George Selwyn, and his like, had little use for a companion who, when people of fashion were mentioned, did not know to what county they belonged, or with what families they were connected; who had never in his life amused himself on a Sunday, and not much on any day of the week; who was easily shocked, and whose purse was slender. The hand of charity, (Judge Curwen said,) was very cold; and the barriers which fenced in the intimacy of the titled and the powerful were all but impenetrable. More than twelve months after he first landed at Dover, the diarist noted, as a very uncommon event, that he had a free conversation

<sup>17</sup> These are the epithets used by Professor Tyler, in the 30th chapter of his *Literary History*. He there quotes an account by Francis Hopkinson, the Whig humourist, of a lady who did not possess one political principle, nor had any precise idea of the real cause of the contest between Great Britain and America; and who yet was a professed and confirmed Tory, merely from the fascination of sounds. The Imperial Crown, the Royal Robes, the High Court of Parliament, the Lord Chancellor of England, were names of irresistible influence; while captains and colonels who were tailors and tavern-keepers, and even the respectable personality of General Washington the Virginian farmer, provoked her unqualified disdain.

with a couple of very affable gentlemen; "the better sort of gentry being too proud or reserved to mix with those whom they did not know, or to indulge in a promiscuous chat."<sup>18</sup>

Loyalist emigrants, who desired to talk American politics with Englishmen from the English point of view, were thrown back upon the casual acquaintances of the coffee-house, the stage-coach, and the inn parlour. Recruiting-officers, commercial travellers, tradesmen on a suburban jaunt, and gentlemen of the turf on the road to a race-meeting, were among those with whom they frequently were reduced to consort. The allusions to their own country, by which on such occasions they were regaled, though not discourteously meant,<sup>19</sup> affected them with more pain than pleasure; for they consisted mainly in sweeping denunciations of vengeance against the New England people, and blatant depreciation of the New England character. More than once an exile confessed that he felt nowhere so much at ease as in the company of quiet middle-class citizens of Birmingham or Bristol who were opponents of the war; for there, at all events, whatever difference of opinion might exist between the guest and his hosts, he was sure of hearing nothing said which grated on his feelings. Over and over again, in public vehicles and in places of general resort, the refugees would gladly have taken their share in a reasonable talk about the equity of demanding that the colonies should contribute towards the expenses of our Empire, and the importance to America of retaining her connection with Great Britain; but the dialogue almost always took such a turn that, before half a dozen sentences had been spoken, they were forced by their self-respect as Americans to assume the cudgels against defamers of their nation. Judge Curwen, while journeying from the West by way of Tewkesbury, met an officer who allowed himself great liberties respecting America. "I took the freedom of giving him several severe checks; and my companion spared not till he was thoroughly silenced and humbled. He said many ungenerous, foolish, and false things, and I did not forbear telling him so." In December 1776 a Mr. Lloyd of the Twentieth Regiment, who had just arrived from Canada, treated the New England Loyalists to a discourse which he no doubt sincerely intended as a compliment to themselves, and a tribute to their political views. "He speaks," said Curwen, "of the

<sup>18</sup> June 10, and July 13, 1776.

<sup>19</sup> Curwen was only once subjected to direct and intentional impertinence. "In our way through Long Row we were attacked by the virulent tongue of a vixen, who saluted us by the name of 'damned American rebels.'"—*Curwen's Journal*; Bristol, June 17, 1777.



Yankees, (as he is pleased to call them,) as cowards, poltroons, cruel, and possessing every bad quality the depraved heart can be cursed with. It is my earnest wish the despised Americans may convince these conceited islanders, by some knock-down irrefragable argument, that, without regular standing armies, our continent can furnish brave soldiers and expert commanders; for then, and not till then, may we expect generous or fair treatment. It piques my pride, I confess, to hear us called '*our Colonies, our Plantations,*' with such airs as if our property and persons were absolutely theirs, like the villains in the old feudal system."<sup>20</sup>

Those were strange sayings in the mouth of a man who had broken up his life, and wrecked his happiness, because he would not side with the colonists in the attitude which they had adopted towards the mother-country. The most distressing element in the lot of the emigrants was that they had always been animated, and now were tortured, by a double patriotism; for they were condemned to stand by, idle and powerless, while the two nations, which they equally loved, were tearing at each other's vitals. Symptoms of the conflict between loyalty to Britain, and affection for America, are visible on every page of Judge Curwen's Journal, and in every paragraph of his correspondence. He rejoiced at having justice done to his countrymen by an English officer of character in Sir Guy Carleton's army, who testified that Arnold and the Provincials had displayed great bravery in the battle on Lake Champlain, but had been out-matched by superior weight of metal. He expressed himself as not a little mortified when, standing on a height which overlooked Plymouth Harbour, he saw a captured American privateer brought round from Dartmouth; nor were his ears a little wounded when they were condemned to hear another such prize sold at open auction. He noted with despair the determination of the King and his advisers to overwhelm and ruin the rebellious colonies. "Would to God," he cried, "that moderate and just views of the real interests of both countries might possess the minds of those who direct the public measures here, and there! The language of the Court, (the papers say,) is, as it ever has been, *Delenda est Carthago*. If this be not slander, woe betide my poor country."<sup>21</sup> At last, when Lord North and his colleagues began to reap

<sup>20</sup> *Curwen's Journal*; Sept. 11, and Dec. 18, 1776.

<sup>21</sup> *Journal* of Dec. 21, 1776, and Feb. 28, 1777. Letter to the Reverend Isaac Smith, Jan. 17, 1778.

the fruits of their senseless policy in a harvest of national perils, Curwen's fears for America, though none the less gloomy, became overshadowed by his anxiety about the future of England. In March 1778 he heard "the dreaded sound, War declared against France." Some few days before, he had written to a Birmingham friend that, when he contemplated the decline and fall of great and powerful states,—and the causes of that decline which, in the history of the world, were uniformly the same,—he could not recall to his mind the commanding and secure position of Great Britain four years since, as compared with the present alarming crisis, without horror and trembling. "May my apprehensions," he said, "exist only in imagination! I had rather be a mistaken man than a true prophet."<sup>22</sup>

Those apprehensions about the stability of the British power, which racked the imagination of the banished American, were always present to the minds of Englishmen who had watched many wars, who knew the continent of Europe, who cared for their country, and who understood that country's interests. Horace Walpole, in more than one manly and thoughtful passage, reviewed the long correspondence with his old friend at Florence which had begun when his own father was still Prime Minister; had continued while England was "down at Derby, and up at Minden;" and was still in progress now that she had dashed herself, (so he sorrowfully declared,) below the point to which no natural law of gravitation could have thrown her in the course of a century.<sup>23</sup> The middle portion, said Walpole, of that correspondence had been the most agreeable. Its earlier part was the journal of a civil war, when an army of Scottish rebels penetrated almost unopposed into the very centre of the island. Fifteen years afterwards,—when our generals marched, and our fleets sailed, under Chatham's auspices,—it was his proud and pleasant task to recount victory upon victory, and conquest upon conquest; but for the last five years his letters had been the records of a mouldering kingdom. The ministers, indeed, encouraged their countrymen by recalling how England had more than once maintained herself successfully against both France and Spain; but, (said Walpole,) we on former occasions had America as a weight in our scale of the balance, whereas now it was in theirs; and moreover we then possessed a Lord Chatham, who did not seem to have been replaced. "As I have no great faith," he subsequently wrote, "in virtue

<sup>22</sup> *Journal* of March 20; and letter of March 16, 1778.

<sup>23</sup> Horace Walpole to Sir Horace Mann; Sept. 5, 1779.

tempted by power, I expect that the American leaders will not easily part with dictatorships and consulships to retire to their private ploughs. Oh, madness to have squandered away such an empire!"<sup>24</sup>

Predictions of that sort were no new things; and people endeavoured to relieve their uneasiness by reminding each other how there never had been a time of serious public danger when somebody did not sincerely believe that the country was on the verge of destruction. Sir John Sinclair,—the prince of busybodies,—brought Adam Smith the news of Saratoga, and added, on his own account, that the nation was now ruined. "There is a great deal of ruin in a nation," was the philosopher's quiet reply;<sup>25</sup> and yet Sir John Sinclair might well have proved to be in the right, if George the Third had pursued his course to the end, unchecked. The prophets of evil, for once in a way, were the wise men; and their predictions would undoubtedly have been fulfilled to the letter, had it not been for a contingency which the most sanguine patriots did not venture confidently to anticipate. How long the end would have been in coming no man fortunately now can tell; but, in the long run, the policy of the Court must have been fatal to the country unless Parliament had taken the matter into its own hands, and insisted on composing the quarrel with America. Parliament, however, during many sessions seemed to have been effectually bribed into acquiescence; and the means at the disposal of the Treasury for gratifying the cupidity of venal politicians grew in proportion to the growing expenditure on military and naval operations. Every new expedition to the Carolinas or the West India seas, and every fresh enemy who came against us in Europe, increased the mass of profits from loans, and lotteries, and contracts which was available for being divided among supporters of the Government. The war fed corruption, and corruption kept on foot the war; but there was something in the English nature whereon George the Third and the Bedfords had not counted; and two successive Parliaments, which had both begun very badly, shook themselves free from the trammels of self-interest and servility, defied their taskmasters, and saved their country.

The scholarship at our universities in the earlier days of George the Third was less severely accurate than it became during the first fifty years of the succeeding century; but many English gentlemen, not only at college, but in after life, read Latin as they read French;

<sup>24</sup> Walpole to Mann, May 27, 1776; June 16, 1779.

<sup>25</sup> *Life of Adam Smith*, by John Rae; chapter xxii.

and every one who pretended to literature had a fair knowledge of ancient history, and a clear conception with regard to the personal identity, and the relative authority and merit, of the most famous Greek authors. It was well understood that the narratives of Xenophon and Polybius, of Sallust and Suetonius, owed much of their peculiar excellence to the fact that those writers had been alive during at least some part of the periods which they treated; and had been acquainted with not a few of the warriors and rulers whose actions they immortalised, or whose mistakes and crimes they condemned. Despairing English patriots, who correctly predicted a succession of disasters, but who did not foresee that the public ruin would ultimately be averted by a resurrection of national common-sense, looked around them for an historian who might undertake the melancholy task of chronicling the misfortunes of England. They sought a Tacitus; and they thought to have discovered one, ready to their hand, in Doctor William Robertson, whose "History of Scotland" had founded his position as an author, and whose "History of Charles the Fifth" had won him a European name. Robertson had for some years been occupied with the earlier annals of America, and was steadily approaching the point where he would come into contact with the great political question of the hour; for the first instalment of his work, which appeared in 1777, brought him much more than half-way between Christopher Columbus and Charles Townshend. The hopes excited in the reading world are indicated by Edmund Burke, in language on a higher level than is often reached by a letter of thanks for a presentation copy. "There remains before you a great field. I am heartily sorry we are now supplying you with that kind of dignity and concern which is purchased to history at the expense of mankind. I had rather, by far, that Doctor Robertson's pen were employed only in delineating the humble scenes of political economy, and not the great events of a civil war. However, if our statesmen had read the book of human nature instead of the Journals of the House of Commons, and history instead of Acts of Parliament, we should not by the latter have furnished out so ample a page in the former.... Adieu, Sir! Continue to instruct the world, and,—whilst *we* carry on a poor unequal conflict with the passions and prejudices of our day, perhaps with no better weapons than other passions and prejudices of our own,—convey wisdom to future generations." <sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Edmund Burke, Esq., to Doctor Robertson; June 10, 1777.



Robertson's "America" was ransacked greedily by people who hoped to discover in its pages satirical references to current events, and arch strokes against the politicians of their own time. But the admirable historians whom that generation produced, both in Edinburgh and in London, habitually refrained from those contemporary allusions which a French writer has stigmatised as the sidelong leers of history, in contradistinction to her straightforward and honest glances into the facts of the past. In his account of the settlement of the Western Continent, Doctor Robertson had much to say about the projects of Las Casas, and much about James the First and Sir Walter Raleigh; but there was not a phrase which could be twisted into a covert expression of his views on the Declaratory Act or the Boston Port Bill. Sedate and sagacious Scotch divine that he was, he had no intention whatever of diving into a perilous controversy which he was not enough of a partisan even to enjoy. Although he considered the Americans premature in asserting their independence, he none the less was of opinion that the whole matter had been sadly mismanaged by the Cabinet.<sup>27</sup> It must not be forgotten that Doctor Robertson was the King's Historiographer for Scotland. The emolument, indeed, was of no object to him in comparison with the profits of literature; for his "Charles the Fifth" alone had produced a sum of money which amounted to twice the capital value of his official salary. Nor, as he on more than one occasion gave honourable proof, was he afraid of speaking his mind when he conceived reticence to be unworthy of his station and his character. But the post of Historiographer had been revived, with the King's consent and at the King's cost, as a particular compliment to Robertson himself; and he was not disposed to requite his Majesty's favour by recording, for the information of all time, the improvidence and incapacity of his Majesty's ministers.

Robertson had a stronger reason yet for circumspection and caution in his reluctance to begin telling a story whose catastrophe was still hidden in the unknown future. His professional pride as an historian forbade him to put forward theories, and deliver judgements, which the issue might show to be erroneous, and even ridiculous. In whatever manner, (so he wrote in the preface to the first volume of his History,) the unhappy contest might terminate, a new order of things must arise in North American, and American affairs would assume

<sup>27</sup> Letter from Doctor Robertson of October 6, 1775, as printed in Section III. of his Life by Dugald Stewart.

quite another aspect. He would therefore "wait, with the solitude of a good citizen, until the ferment subsided, and regular government was again established." When those days arrived Robertson must expect to be over sixty; and an extensive history, commenced at that time of life, is too often not so much a tribute to Clio as an excuse to Charon. The Latin saying, which warns the artist that life is brief, came forcibly home to one who had so continuously and conscientiously practised the very longest among all the arts.

Robertson apart, of the triumvirate of noted British historians Gibbon and David Hume remained; but Hume did not remain long. He died on the twenty-fifth of August, 1776, and met his fate with a cheerful serenity which deeply scandalised some excellent persons who had pleased themselves by conceiving a very different picture of the sceptic's death-bed.<sup>28</sup> But, though without any uneasiness as to what might befall himself, he passed away in the conviction that immense dangers overhung the country. A stronger Tory than George the Third, Hume had not allowed his views and prejudices concerning home politics to blind his insight into colonial questions. The most caustic remarks about the folly of alienating the Americans, and the impossibility of subduing them, came from the pen, not of any Whig or Wilkite, but of David Hume; and Hume was a Jacobite who would have been heartily pleased if the King had hanged Wilkes, had shot down the Liverymen and their apprentices by hundreds, and then, after making a terrible example of London, had announced his intention of reigning ever afterwards in Stuart fashion.<sup>29</sup> The autumn before his death Hume was requested to draw up an Address to the Crown from the county of Renfrew; but he declined, on the ground that he was an American in principle, and wished that the colonists should be let alone to govern, or misgovern, themselves as they thought proper. If, (such was the form that his suggestion took,) the inhabitants of the county felt it indispensably necessary to interpose in public affairs,

<sup>28</sup> Any mention of the calmness and equanimity with which Hume departed this life never failed to arouse in Doctor Johnson very opposite emotions. Adam Smith had borne testimony to the tranquillity of his friend's closing hours; and Johnson could not forgive him. Sir Walter Scott's account of the interview at Glasgow between the two philosophers, in spite of the serious nature of the topic, is a gem of comedy. Note to Croker's edition of Boswell's *Tour to the Hebrides*, under the date of the 29th October, 1773.

<sup>29</sup> Hume prayed that he might see the scoundrelly mob vanquished, and a third of London in ruins. "I think," he wrote, "I am not too old to despair of being witness to all these blessings." Hume to Sir Gilbert Elliot; 22nd June, 1768.

they should advise the King to punish those insolent rascals in London and Middlesex who had set at nought his authority, and should dutifully inform him that Lord North, though an estimable gentleman, had no head for great military operations. "These," (he said,) "are objects worthy of the respectable county of Renfrew; not mauling the poor unfortunate Americans in the other hemisphere."<sup>30</sup>

Gibbon, indeed, was still in his prime; but he did not even contemplate the notion of exchanging the colossal literary undertaking, to which he looked for the establishment of his fame and the improvement of his modest fortune, for such a hypothetical theme as the decline and fall of England. He had no inclination to leave untold the defeat of Attila at Châlons, and the siege of Constantinople by Mahomet the Second, in order to expend his gorgeous rhetoric over the battle at Monmouth Court House, or the investment and evacuation of Boston. His political opponents, who likewise were his constant and familiar associates, professed to discover a less respectable motive for his unwillingness to transfer his historical researches into another field.

"King George, in a fright  
Lest Gibbon should write  
The story of England's disgrace,  
Thought no way so sure  
His pen to secure  
As to give the historian a place."

The little poem, whereof that is the first stanza, is attributed to Charles Fox, and most certainly it emanated from Brooks's Club; an institution which contained a group of witty and scholarly men of the world who,—as the graceful, flowing verse of the *Rolliad* very soon made manifest,—literally thought in rhyme. Brooks's had an exceedingly strong case against Gibbon. In the first stages of the American Revolution he was a staunch, though a silent, adherent of the Ministry;

<sup>30</sup> Letter to Baron Mure; Oct. 27, 1775. Hume was closely connected with John Crawford, the friend of Charles Fox and the Member for Renfrewshire. It was Crawford who induced young Lord Tavistock to read Hume's History, which the Duke of Bedford, a careful Whig parent, had forbidden his son and heir to open.

A very few months before his death Hume confided to his most intimate friend his belief that England was on the verge of decline, and pronounced himself unable to give any reason for the complete absence of administrative genius, civil and military, which marked the period. *John Home's Diary of his Journey to London in company with David Hume*; April 30, 1776.

but he consorted mainly with the Opposition, among whom he found that which, to his excellent taste, was the best company in London.<sup>31</sup> He belonged to the club as of right; for, great man of letters though Gibbon was, he never ceased to be a recognised personage in the world of fashion. He wrote his letters at Brooks's; he supped there, or at Almack's, after the House of Commons was up for the night; and he freely accepted the condition on which alone it was possible to enjoy good Whig society, inasmuch as he listened tolerantly,—and, (as time progressed,) even complacently,—to orthodox Whig views. "Charles Fox," he wrote, "is now at my elbow, declaiming on the impossibility of keeping America, since a victorious army has been unable to maintain any extent of posts in the single province of Jersey."<sup>32</sup>

Gibbon,—to whom usually, at this period of their acquaintance, Fox was "Charles," and nothing more distant or ceremonious,—loved the young statesman, and never tired of hearing him discourse. The historian, however, did not need any one to teach him the deductions which his own bright and powerful intellect drew from a contemplation of the political facts. Gibbon's familiar epistles already frankly indicated that he had begun to pass through the mental process which, sooner or later, was traversed by almost every sensible man in the country whose perceptions were not distorted by the promptings of self-interest. Even before Saratoga he had serious qualms. In August 1777 he spoke of himself as having found it much easier to defend the justice, than the policy, of the ministerial measures; and,—in a phrase worthy to stand among the weightiest that he ever printed,—he admitted that there were certain cases where whatever was repugnant to sound policy ceased to be just. In the following December, Gibbon had got to the point of saying that, however the Government might resolve, he could scarcely give his consent to exhaust still further the finest country in the world by the prosecution of a war whence no reasonable man entertained any hope of success; in February 1778 he stated it as his opinion that Lord North did not deserve pardon for the past, applause for the present, nor confidence for the future; and on one critical occasion he passed from word to action, and voted with

<sup>31</sup> "This moment Beauclerk, Lord Ossory, Sheridan, Garrick, Burke, Charles Fox, and Lord Camden, (no bad set, you will perhaps say,) have left me." Gibbon to J. B. Holroyd, Esq.; Saturday night, 14th March, 1778. "I have been hard at work since dinner," (he wrote elsewhere,) "and am just setting out for Lady Payne's Assembly; after which I will perhaps sup with Charles, etcetera, at Almack's."

<sup>32</sup> Almack's; Wednesday evening, March 5, 1777.



Fox in a division bearing on the conduct of the war.<sup>33</sup> None the less, in the summer of the next year, he became a Lord Commissioner of Trade and Plantations. He joined a Board where, according to Edmund Burke, eight members of Parliament received salaries of a thousand pounds a year apiece for doing nothing except mischief, and not very much even of that;<sup>34</sup> and thenceforward, as by contract bound, he acted with the ministers. His story curiously illustrated the artificial and mechanical character of the support which enabled the Court to prolong the American war in opposition to the genuine wish of the people. Eleven days before accepting office, Gibbon, in Brooks's Club, had informed as many of the members as stood within hearing that there could be no salvation for the country until the heads of six of the principal persons in the Administration were laid upon the table. That truculent sentence was carefully entered by Charles Fox in his copy of the "Decline and Fall," with the addition of some biting comments. Two years afterwards an execution took place at Fox's house, and all the volumes in his library were sold by auction;—whether he had acquired them on credit at a shop, or, (which was the case here,) as a present from the author. Poor Charles's autograph enhanced the value of the History. "Such," wrote Walpole, "was the avidity of bidders for the smallest production of so wonderful a genius that, by the addition of this little record, the book sold for three guineas."<sup>35</sup>

In default of these great authors whose names are still known, and whose works are still read, expectation was for a while concentrated upon a writer who then lived in a halo of celebrity which is now dim almost to extinction. Mrs. Catherine Macaulay, the sister of Lord

<sup>33</sup> On February the 2nd, 1778, Gibbon was in a minority of 165 to 259 on Fox's motion, "That no more of the Old Corps be sent out of the Kingdom."

<sup>34</sup> Burke's *Speech on presenting to the House of Commons a Plan for the better Security of the Independence of Parliament, and the Economical Reformation of the Civil and other Establishments*. The passage relating to the Board of Trade and Plantations,—in itself a treasury of wit and wisdom,—covered a twelfth part of that vast oration, and must have taken twenty minutes to deliver. "I can never forget the delight with which that diffusive and ingenious orator was heard by all sides of the House, and even by those whose existence he proscribed. The Lords of Trade blushed at their own insignificance." That good-humoured confession is from a note in the most comprehensive of Gibbon's numerous Autobiographies.

<sup>35</sup> *Last Journals*; June 20, 1781. Anthony Storer, writing to Lord Carlisle, gave a somewhat different account of the matter. "Charles's books, which were seized, were sold this week. Gibbon's book, which contained the manuscript note by Charles, was smuggled from the sale; for, though Charles wished to have sold it, yet it never was put up. He bought in most of his books for almost nothing."

Mayor Sawbridge, had for many years past been giving to the press a History of England from the Accession of the Stuart Family. Each successive volume was hailed by able, learned, and even cynical, men, (if only they were Whigs,) with admiration and delight quite incomprehensible to modern students. Mason pronounced Mrs. Macaulay's book the one history of England which he had thought it worth his while to purchase, and confessed his national pride to be gratified when he learned that, although her husband's name was Scotch, she herself had been born of English parents. Gray ranked her above every previous author who had attempted the same subject, and thereby gave her the preference over Clarendon, Hume, and Burnet;<sup>36</sup> and Horace Walpole endorsed Gray's estimate in the most unqualified language. George, Lord Lyttelton, the historian of Henry the Second, said that she was a prodigy,—solemnly and sincerely, as he said everything,—and exhorted mankind to erect statues in her honour. Portraits of Mrs. Macaulay, in fancy characters, and by engravers of note, were on every print-seller's counter; and an artist came over from America expressly in order to model her and Lord Chatham in wax. She was one of the sights which foreigners were carried to see in London; and she met with flattering attentions in Paris, where England was so much in fashion that current English reputations were taken unreservedly, and sometimes even rapturously, on trust. Among the more audacious thinkers in the society of the French capital enthusiasm was ecstatic with regard to a lady who was a republican by conviction, and the severity of whose strictures upon a State clergy were not prompted by the narrowness or fanaticism of a religious sectary.<sup>37</sup>

Overrated by some clever judges, and adulated by many foolish people in exceedingly foolish ways, Catherine Macaulay was at the height of her repute when the American controversy was developed into a war. In one month of 1776 three set panegyrics on her talents and deserts appeared in the columns of a single London newspaper.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> So did not Lord Macaulay. An industrious, but not very discerning, critic had remarked that Bishop Burnet's *History of His Own Times* was of a class with the works of Oldmixon, Kennett, and Macaulay. That lady's distinguished namesake wrote thus on the margin of the passage: "Nonsense! Who reads Oldmixon now? Who reads Kennett? Who reads Kate Macaulay? Who does not read Burnet?"

<sup>37</sup> "What could persuade the writer that Mrs. Macaulay was a Dissenter? I believe her blood was not *polluted* with the smallest *taint* of that kind." Extract from a letter, as given in *Nichols's Literary Anecdotes*; Vol. IX., page 689.

<sup>38</sup> The opening of a Birthday Address, (by a poet who was not afraid of repeating an adjective which pleased his fancy,) exemplifies the taste of the age, and the high-flown language which it was customary to use when complimenting Mrs. Macaulay. She

Readers were keenly excited by her promise of a "History of England from the Revolution to the Present Time, in a series of Letters to the Reverend Doctor Wilson, the Rector of St. Stephen's, Walbrook;" for Mrs. Macaulay had not emancipated herself from the delusion that sprightliness could be infused into a dull book by arranging its contents in the form of epistolary correspondence. "Sir Robert Walpole, my friend, was well acquainted with the blindness of the nation to every circumstance which regarded their true interest." That is a specimen sentence from Mrs. Macaulay; and it is difficult to imagine how such a style of composition could be tolerated by Horace Walpole, whose own youthful narrative of the scenes in Parliament, which led up to his father's fall, palpitates with life as do the political letters of Cicero.

The literary form, into which Mrs. Macaulay had thrown her History, proved in the sequel fatal to her reputation as an author. The Doctor Wilson, for whose edification the book professed to be written, was no ordinary, or parsimonious, admirer. He had made over to Mrs. Macaulay his house at Bath, with the furniture and library; he placed her statue, adorned with the attributes of the Muse of History, inside the altar-rails of his church; and he built a vault where her remains should rest when her spirit had joined the immortals.<sup>39</sup> The first volume of the Continuation of her History was published in 1778. Before that year ended Mrs. Macaulay took to herself a second husband, who was very much less than half her own age, and who was not Doctor Wilson. The statue was at once removed, the house reclaimed,

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was born in April; and she then resided at Alfred House,—a name that suggested the motive of the poem.

"Just patriot King! Sage founder of our laws,  
Whose life was spent in virtue's glorious cause:  
If aught on earth, blest saint, be worth thy care,  
Oh! deign this day's solemnity to share,  
(Sacred to friendship and to festive mirth,)  
The day that gave the fair Macaulay birth;  
Whose learned page, impartial, dares explain  
Each vice, or virtue, of each different reign,  
Which tends to violate thy sacred plan,  
Or perfect what thy sacred laws began.

Blest month! Tho' sacred to the Cyprian Dame  
This day, at least, let sage Minerva claim,  
(Sacred to friendship and to social mirth,)  
The day which gave her loved Macaulay birth!

<sup>39</sup> *Nichols's Literary Anecdotes*; Vol. VIII., page 458.

and the vault sold. The clergyman and the lady paraded their mutual grievances before a disenchanted world; and that world, as its custom is, revenged its own infatuation upon the idol whom it had unduly worshipped. The complimentary odes, in which her praises had once been sung, gave place to satirical parodies reflecting on a Certain Female Patriot; the new book was recognised to be detestably bad; and it was the last of the series. A sense of humour could not be counted among Mrs. Macaulay's gifts; but she perceived the absurdity of continuing, through a long succession of volumes, to pour forth exhaustive disquisitions on the Stamp Act, and minute examinations of the New England Charters, interspersed with affectionate epithets addressed to an elderly gentleman between whom and herself there notoriously existed an irreconcilable quarrel.

No worthy record of that eventful time can be found in any contemporary book which was deliberately compiled as a history; but the age nevertheless gave birth to a vast mass of political literature, written for the purpose of the moment, some portion of which will never be allowed to die. There is a stirring and decisive chapter in the story of ancient Greece which a good scholar makes shift to pick out, and piece together, for himself from the orations of Æschines and Demosthenes; and so,—between the day that George the Third instituted the system of Personal Government, down to the day when the American war, (the chief, and almost the solitary, fruit and product of that system,) ended in public disaster and national repentance,—the most brilliant and authentic account of the period may be drawn from Edmund Burke's published speeches and controversial treatises. Apart from, and above, their unique literary merit, those performances are notable as showing how the gravity of a statesman, and the sense of responsibility which marks a genuine patriot, can co-exist with an unflinching courage in the choice and the handling of topics. That courage, in the case of Burke, was exercised with impunity throughout the most perilous of times. Multitudinous and formidable were the assailants whose attacks, from the in-coming of Lord Bute to the outgoing of the Duke of Grafton, were directed against the King, and those King's Friends who made office a purgatory for every King's Minister whom the King did not love; but all their effusions together were less damaging in their effect on the minds of impartial men than the "Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents," the last ten pages of the "Observations on a late State of the Nation," and one



very brief paragraph of courtly and almost reverential irony in that marvel of point and compression which is entitled a "Short Account of a Short Administration."<sup>40</sup>

Other, and less redoubtable, critics of the Government,—as well as the very craftsmen who printed, and the tradesmen who sold, their writings,—were punished with the utmost rigour of the law, and harassed by the arbitrary vindictiveness of Parliament; but neither the Attorney-General, nor the Sergeant-at-Arms, ever meddled with Burke or his publishers. It was the strongest possible testimonial, on the part of his adversaries, to his character and his standing in the country. The agents of the Government would no more have ventured to prosecute Edmund Burke for libel than they would have dared to arrest Lord Chatham on a charge of treason as he passed out of the House of Lords after delivering one of his diatribes against the influence of the Crown. Burke enjoyed immunity himself, and extended the shield of his protection over his humbler associates in the business of giving his opinions to the reading world, during the miserable years when the persecution of the Press was at its height. All the more, after the American difficulty had become serious,—when the power of the Executive was on the decline, and the Censorship had lost its terrors,—the great Whig publicist, if his taste and self-respect had permitted, might safely have pursued the Court and the Cabinet with an unbounded licence of invective. But he wisely preferred to set forth his opinions with the same measured and dignified force of argument and illustration as he had displayed when the Middlesex Election was the question of the day. He could not, indeed, write better than he had written already; but close reasoning, supported by a solid array of facts and figures, has nowhere been presented in a shape more attractive and persuasive than in Burke's "Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol," and in the authorised report of his "Speech on moving the Resolutions for Conciliation with America."

A literary work of rare merit seldom stands alone, and in most cases proceeds from the pen of one who does best what many around him are attempting to do well. Burke's masterpieces were produced at

<sup>40</sup> "In the prosecution of their measures they were traversed by an Opposition of a new and singular character; an Opposition of placemen and pensioners. They were supported by the confidence of the nation; and, having held their offices under many difficulties and discouragements, they left them at the express command, as they had accepted them at the earnest request, of their Royal Master." So mildly did Burke refer to the usage which Lord Rockingham and his colleagues encountered from the monarch whom they so faithfully served.

a time when the political essay was widely practised, and held in great account. The historian, who is destined to relate the events of our own generation, will be under an obligation to read leading articles by the furlong and the mile; for, during the past half-century, the leading article has frequently dictated the action of the State, has inspired or terrorised its rulers, and has kept them up to the mark, or below it, until their allotted task has, for good or evil, been accomplished. But between 1774 and 1783 the leading article, strictly so called, was yet in the future. The news in newspapers, already ample in quantity, year by year improved in accuracy; but the editorial comments on public affairs were confined to paragraphs of five or six, to a dozen, lines, allusive rather than explanatory in their character, and for the most part of a humorous and satirical tendency. Serious instruction and exhortation were conveyed to the world in the pamphlets of well-known men who acknowledged their authorship; and (within the columns of daily and weekly journals,) by means of long, elaborate, and often extremely able letters, signed by some adopted name, for the periodical reappearance of which a large circle of readers eagerly looked. Charles Fox, who was conversant with every legitimate method of influencing opinion, has clearly drawn the distinction between the signed letter and the newspaper paragraph. Grave problems in foreign and domestic politics must, (he said,) first be treated in some earnest and plain way, and must be much explained to the public before any paragraphs alluding to them could be understood by one in a thousand.<sup>41</sup> These responsible, or semiresponsible, personal manifestoes, (for a writer who styled himself Atticus or Publicola was expected to be rational in his arguments, and constitutional in his views, almost as much as one who called himself by his Christian name, and his surname, in full,) had never been so numerous, or attained so high an average level of excellence, as during the American war. Junius, indeed, whoever Junius was, had not published a single sentence of print since Philip Francis sailed for India. A conspicuous niche was vacant, which no single successor or imitator had been reckoned worthy to fill; but the lists of controversy were thronged by a perfect phalanx of well-in-

<sup>41</sup> "I cannot think as you do of the insignificancy of newspapers, though I think that others overrate their importance. I am clear, too, that paragraphs alone will not do. Subjects of importance should be first gravely treated in letters or pamphlets or, (best of all perhaps,) in a series of letters; and afterwards the paragraphs do very well as an accompaniment. It is not till a subject has been so much discussed as to become threadbare that *paragraphs*, which consist principally in allusions, can be generally understood." Fox to Fitzpatrick; St. Ann's Hill; Sunday, November, (or December,) 1785.

formed and fervid partisans, who, under a variety of Greek and Roman pseudonyms, insisted on the madness of the policy which Parliament had adopted, and held up to reprobation the ministerial and military blunders which prevented that policy from being crowned with even a transitory success.

As opposed to all this spontaneous ardour, and unfettered intellectual activity, there was very little independent talent on the side of the ministers. It was their own fault. In Parliament, and in literature, they had bought up everything that was for sale; and they found themselves in the position of a general when he has overpaid his mercenaries, and cannot get volunteers who are disposed to fight for him, and willing to subject themselves to the necessary discipline. Doctor Tucker, the Dean of Gloucester, was a declared adversary of the Rockingham party. His pamphlets had a large circulation; but he took a line of his own which sorely embarrassed the Government. A distinterested man, he possessed a cultured and original mind, with a singularly accurate perception of the direction in which the world was moving. When his gaze swept a sufficiently wide horizon, he gave proofs of a foresight which is the wonder of those who have learned by frequent disappointments what their own political prophecies are usually worth.<sup>42</sup> He was, however, woefully deficient in tact; and his ignorance of the motives which guided the action of contemporary public men, and parliamentary parties, was hopeless and complete. He appears sincerely to have believed that the opponents of the Court, whom he called the Modern Republicans, were in point of fact Jacobites who admired Doctor Price as their predecessors in the reign of Queen Anne had admired Doctor Sacheverell. Doctor Price wrote much and well in favour of reconciliation with America; and Dean Tucker was never so happy as when belabouring him and Edmund Burke on account of their partiality for the New England colonists, whom the Dean himself cordially abominated. But his blows seldom got home upon either of his antagonists; and the cudgel with which he laid about him dealt back-strokes that hit a ministerial, and occasionally even a Royal, head.

Here, (argued the Doctor,) is a discontented and riotous population, three thousand miles away across the ocean, who do not like us, and do not want us. We may flatter them, and cajole them, and try to

<sup>42</sup> "I have observed," (Dean Tucker wrote,) "that measures evidently right will prevail at last. Therefore I make not the least Doubt that a Separation from the Northern Colonies,—and also another right measure, viz., a complete Union and Incorporation with Ireland,—(however unpopular either of them will now appear,) will both take place within half a century."

appease them by making one concession and surrender after another; and then, when we have eaten a mountain of humble-pie compounded for us by the philosophers and orators of the Opposition, the Americans will perhaps graciously consent to pretend that they will abide a while longer in their allegiance to the British Crown. But, as they increase in strength and numbers, an army of fifty thousand, and before long a hundred thousand, English-born soldiers, (and none others can be trusted,) will scarcely be sufficient to keep their turbulent spirits in awe, and prevent them from breaking forth into insurrection at every favourable opportunity. And how could such an insurrection be quelled? What British officer, civil or military, would be so foolhardy as to order the troops to fire on a New England mob, with the assured prospect that, if any of the bullets carried straight, he would be tried for his life on a charge of murder before a New England jury?<sup>43</sup> Mr. Burke, (said Tucker,) would deserve much better of his country if,—in place of giving the colonists fair words in print, and speaking respectfully and affectionately about them when he was addressing the House of Commons,—he would bid them cut themselves loose from Great Britain, and thenceforward go their own ways, to their inevitable loss and ruin. That was Dean Tucker's logical position; and that was his advice in the year 1774. He undoubtedly made Burke very angry; but Lord North and the King would sometimes have been quite as thankful if their reverend ally had only been pleased to leave the Cabinet undefended.

The destitution to which ministers were reduced for want of advocates obliged them to accept assistance from a very questionable quarter. John Shebbeare had now during nearly two generations been a scandal to letters. His coarseness and effrontery in the give and take of private society have been faithfully portrayed by Fanny Burney, a judge of manners as indulgent and as uncensorious as was compatible with native refinement and feminine delicacy.<sup>44</sup> Shebbeare made his livelihood by defamation and scurrility. His first literary effort was a lampoon on the surgeon from whom he had received a medical education; and his last was entitled "The Polecat Detected;" which was a

<sup>43</sup> Dean Tucker's Fourth Tract; 1775.

<sup>44</sup> On the 20th February, 1774, Miss Burney and some of her friends, one of whom was a very young girl, were unfortunate enough to find themselves guests in the same drawing-room as Shebbeare. "He absolutely ruined our evening; for he is the most morose, rude, gross, and ill-mannered man I ever was in company with." Much of his conversation, as reported by Miss Burney with her transparent fidelity, was incredibly brutal; and still worse passages were crossed out in the manuscript.



libel, and not, (as might have been supposed,) an autobiography. During the reign of George the Second, Shebbeare had been severely,—and, indeed, arbitrarily and most improperly,—punished for a fierce attack upon the House of Hanover. He now enjoyed a pension of two hundred pounds a year; and he was aware of the conditions on which, for such as he, the payment of his quarter's stipend depended. Throughout the American war he vilified the group of great statesmen, whom George the Third persisted in regarding as adversaries, with the same ill-bred vehemence which he had formerly directed against that line of kings who were the rivals and supplanters of the Stuarts. Shebbeare was the man whose name Thomas Townshend, in the House of Commons, had coupled with that of Samuel Johnson, on the ground that they both had once been Jacobites, and both now were pensioners; and Townshend's ill-natured remark had called forth from Charles Fox an eloquent and indignant protest which, to his dying day, Johnson gratefully recollected.

There were members of the Government who had long been anxious to enlist Doctor Johnson's literary skill, and personal authority, on behalf of the Government measures. In this case there was no compulsion. The King entertained a true regard for his eminent subject, and felt a lively satisfaction at the thought that his own generosity had enabled a great author,—who had long known want, and sorrow, and the slavery of set tasks and uncongenial labours,—to spend the rest of his days in conversation, and travel, and the desultory and fragmentary reading which he so dearly loved. It was Johnson himself who conceived that his duty towards his Royal Master required him to do a good turn for those ministers who possessed the Royal favour; and he intimated his willingness to assist the Cabinet with his pen. The subject of each successive pamphlet was suggested to him by great men in office; but the opinions which he enunciated were unmistakably his own. Indeed, Johnson was so strong a partisan that the censors of Downing Street interfered with him only to tone down his declarations of policy, and to blunt the edge of his satire. One cutting and contemptuous epigram in his "Thoughts on the late Transactions Respecting the Falkland Islands" so scared Lord North that the sale of the first edition was stopped after only a few copies had got abroad.<sup>45</sup> In

<sup>45</sup> The words which did not please Lord North related to George Grenville, and originally stood thus: "Let him not, however, be depreciated in his grave. He had powers not universally possessed. Could he have enforced payment of the Manilla ransom, he could have counted it." In the second edition the sentence ran: "He had powers

the spring of 1775 Johnson brought out his "Taxation no Tyranny," which, as the title implied, went down to the root of the quarrel between Great Britain and America. It was revised and curtailed by the ministerial critics, who struck out of the text one passage as unnecessarily insulting and alarming to the colonists.<sup>46</sup> Johnson's sturdy good-humour was proof against a trial which would have touched the vanity of a more susceptible author. If, (he said,) an architect had planned a building of five stories, and the man who employed him ordered him to build only three, it was the employer, and not the architect, who must decide.

The utmost severity of expurgation would have failed to convert "Taxation no Tyranny" into a felicitous performance. Admirable, and thrice admirable, disquisitions on State affairs have been published by famous literary men who descended for a while into the arena of political controversy. Such were Swift's "Examiners;" and Addison's "Freeholders;" and, (better still, and nearer to our own times,) Sydney Smith's "Plymley Letters" on the Catholic Claims. Nor was any more ably composed, and entirely readable, State paper ever issued than that Memoir, in the French language, in which Gibbon, at the request of ministers, towards the commencement of 1778 submitted the case of England, as against France, to the judgement of Europe. But Johnson was not even potentially a statesman. He had never thought deeply, or wisely, on politics; and his everyday conversation abundantly proved him to be peculiarly ill adapted for arriving at a just conclusion upon the American question. He was incapable of maintaining a rational and considerate attitude towards any great body of men with whose opinions he disagreed. His vociferous declamations against the Americans were annoying and oppressive to the companions with whom he lived. He might be heard, (they complained,) across the Atlantic. The study which he bestowed upon the commercial interests, which so profoundly affected the relations between the mother-country and her colonies, had been very superficial. He once comforted a friend, who was anxious about the effect of the war upon trade, by assuring him that, if we had no commerce at all, we could

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not universally possessed; and, if he sometimes erred, he was likewise sometimes in the right;" which is true of every public man that ever lived, and does not require a Samuel Johnson to say it.

<sup>46</sup> "He told me," wrote Boswell, "that they had struck out one passage which was to the effect: 'That the colonists could with no solidity argue, from their not having been taxed while in their infancy, that they should not now be taxed. We do not put a calf into the plough. We wait till he is an ox.'"

live very well upon the produce of our own island. On the connection between taxation and parliamentary representation, which his treatise was ostensibly written to discuss, he argued like a man who had not the most elementary conception of, or sympathy with, the principle of self-government. He was fond of saying that a gentleman of landed property did well to evict all his tenants who would not vote for the candidate whom he supported. If he himself, (so the great moralist once put it,) were a man of great estate, he would drive every rascal, whom he did not like, out of the country, as soon as ever an election came.

When "Taxation no Tyranny" appeared in print, most of Johnson's admirers perused the piece with regret, and with something of apprehension. They began to fear that, as a writer, he had seen his best days; and they never recovered their confidence in his powers until, some years later on, his "Lives of the Poets" were given to a charmed and astonished world. There he was on his own ground. There he revelled in the consciousness of supreme capability. He cast aside, at that late moment, the elaborate and florid diction of his early and middle period. During the half of every day, and of every night, since the well-directed bounty of the State had made him his own master, he had been discoursing on every conceivable subject to all who were privileged to listen; and he had insensibly acquired the habit of writing as he talked. He now had an ideal subject for a biographer endowed with his vigorous common-sense, his vast and insatiable interest in the common things of life, and his acute perception of the rules which ought to govern conduct. We may well doubt whether so delightful and instructive a book as Johnson's "Poets," on a large scale and of serious purpose, was ever commenced and finished in the two years that precede, and the two that follow, the age of seventy.<sup>47</sup>

Johnson's pamphlet, by indirect means, obtained a startling notoriety. His bolts fell innocuous; but his thunder awoke an echo which was heard far and wide. Of all people then living,—of all, perhaps, who ever lived,—no one had so profound an acquaintance with the state of opinion at home, and in America, as John Wesley. He knew Scotland well, and England as a man must know it who preached eight hundred sermons annually, in all corners of the island; who, fine or rain, travelled his twelve-score miles a week on horseback, or in public

<sup>47</sup> Carlyle completed his *Frederic the Great* when close on seventy; but he had been working at it fourteen years.

vehicles, which for him was a more perilous mode of conveyance;<sup>48</sup> and who lodged,—an easily contented, an affable, and a communicative guest,—with the farmer, the tradesman, and the cottager. Soon and late, he more than fifty times crossed the Irish Channel. He had passed nearly two years in America; and he had learned by personal experience how long it took to get there; a fact ill understood by those ministers who had misgoverned our remote colonies in peace, and who now were attempting to reconquer them by war. Wesley relates, in the first pages of his incomparable “Journal,” how he and his comrades took ship at Gravesend on the fourteenth of October, 1735; and how, on the following fifth of February, God brought them all safe into the Savannah river. The voyage was long enough for him to learn German, and increase threefold the number of communicants who attended his ministrations on board. Ever since that time he had been kept minutely informed of what was passing in America by disciples for whom it was a privilege to correspond with him, and a sacred duty to write him the truth.

As recently as the year 1770,—when New England was already in a state of dangerous effervescence, and the military occupation of Boston had actually commenced,—John Wesley stated in print that he did not defend the measures which had been taken with regard to America; and that he doubted whether any man could defend them either on the foot of law, equity, or prudence.<sup>49</sup> So he openly told the world; and in secret he dealt very faithfully indeed with the advisers of the Crown. He addressed to them a series of most impressive letters, in which the exalted diction of an old Scriptural prophet added force and dignity to the solid arguments of a sagacious and patriotic Englishman. He warned them plainly that the Americans were an oppressed people, asking for nothing more than their legal rights; who were not frightened, and would not be easily conquered. As fighting men, (he said in so many words,) they were enthusiasts of liberty, contending for hearth and altar, wife and children, against an army of paid soldiers “none of whom cared a straw for the cause wherein

<sup>48</sup> Wesley had turned seventy when the American war began; and thenceforward he more frequently rode in a post-chaise, or a mail-coach. It is worth a reader's while to count the number of his carriage accidents, if only as an occasion for going through the last volume of the *Journal* once again. Sometimes he made a safe journey, as from Coventry in July 1779. “I took coach for London. I was nobly attended. Behind the coach were ten convicted felons, loudly blaspheming, and rattling their chains. By my side sat a man with a loaded blunderbuss, and another upon the coach.”

<sup>49</sup> Wesley's *Free Thoughts on the Present State of Public Affairs*.



they were engaged, and most of whom strongly disapproved of it." And he had gone so far as to implore the Prime Minister, for God's sake and for the King's sake, not to permit his sovereign to walk in the ways of Rehoboam, of Philip the Second of Spain, and of Charles the First of England.

That was John Wesley's view, as conveyed to Lord North on the fifteenth of June, 1775. Before the summer was over there appeared a quarto sheet of four pages, professing itself to be "A Calm Address to our American Colonies by the Reverend John Wesley, M.A." It was sold for a penny, and was bought by forty thousand purchasers, who were amazed at finding it nothing more nor less than an abbreviated version of "Taxation no Tyranny," published without any reference to the original whence it was derived. The little piece was redolent of Johnson's prejudices, and so full of violent and random assertions that no room was left for those temperate expostulations which the title promised. Wesley assured the colonists,—and it must have been news to Samuel Adams and to John Dickinson,—that the discontent in America was not of native origin. It had been produced, (he declared,) by the books and pamphlets of wicked and artful writers resident in England, whose object was to upset the British Constitution; and, considering that the chief among those writers was Edmund Burke, to whom every tittle of the British Constitution was as the Law to a Pharisee or the Koran to a good Mahommedan, there was something exquisitely ludicrous in such a statement. The nearest approach to an argument in Wesley's tract was an appeal to the people of New England, whom, with less than his customary shrewdness, he appears to have esteemed a very simple-minded folk. "You say that you inherit all the rights which your ancestors had of enjoying all the privileges of Englishmen. You are the descendants of men who either had no votes, or resigned them by emigration. You have therefore exactly what your ancestors left you; not a vote in making laws nor in choosing legislators, but the happiness of being protected by laws, and the duty of obeying them." It would be difficult to compress into so few words any theory of citizenship less satisfying to the political aspirations of Americans, either past or present.

Wesley's change of attitude bordered on the grotesque, and to some of his followers was perfectly bewildering. At the general election of the previous year he had advised Bristol Methodists to vote for the candidates who were in favour of conciliation with America; and he had urged his friends to procure and study a pamphlet called "An

Argument in Defence of the Exclusive Right claimed by the Colonies to tax themselves." That circumstance Wesley had forgotten; as a man of his years, and his enormous and multifarious occupations, might be excused forgetting anything. Rudely accused of insincerity, he examined his memory, and admitted that he had read the pamphlet in question, and had agreed with its conclusion. In answer to the charge that he had recommended it to the attention of others, he quietly replied: "I believe I did: but I am now of another mind." Wesley's candour failed to disarm his opponents. The "Calm Address" aroused a tempest of controversy; and during several publishing seasons the great preacher was exposed to hailstorms of wild calumny, and unsavoury abuse. He was furiously denounced as a wolf in sheep's clothing; a Jesuit and a Jacobite unmasked; <sup>50</sup> a chaplain in ordinary to the Furies; and a Minister Extraordinary to Bellona, the Goddess of War.

*It was Trevelyan's contention that "dislike and dread of episcopacy intensified American opposition to the fiscal policy of Parliament," and recent scholarship would tend to support him. The collective action of the American clergy was a mighty force in politics, and as Trevelyan depicts it, it was to be employed to bolster the Patriot cause and to make doubly sure that no bishop was sent to America. Contrariwise, where, as in the Southern plantations, the Church of England had been the dominant faith, that establishment soon became a persecuted body and "went down beneath the first gust of the tornado."*

*The account that Trevelyan gives us of the crucial Battle of Saratoga is along traditional lines, with the onus for the failure of the three-pronged campaign placed more squarely upon Lord George Germain than the Colonial Secretary perhaps deserves. Trevelyan criticizes Germain for entrusting the Northern command to Burgoyne instead of having it executed by Sir Guy Carleton and for having violated the basic principles of military strategy when "he made over to the Americans the immense advantage of operating an interior line of country." Then come the familiar story of Howe's advance on Philadelphia, the inevitable withdrawal by Howe's successor, Sir Henry Clinton, when*

<sup>50</sup> It was not the first time that Wesley had been called a Jesuit. He once was preaching at Dublin to a large assemblage. "One of them, after listening some time, cried out, shaking his head: 'Ay: he is a Jesuit; that's plain.' To which a Popish Priest, who happened to be near, replied aloud: 'No; he is not. I would to God he was!'" *Journal* for May 15, 1748.

*the military situation deteriorated and France's entry into the war rendered Philadelphia untenable. Until the end of hostilities, Clinton was to be left in command of the royal forces in America, hampered by Germain's "foolish and contradictory orders" and unable to count upon the assistance of a navy "mismanaged and misdirected by the Earl of Sandwich." While in his own lifetime Clinton was accounted the most notorious of those*

*"Generals who will not conquer when they may,  
Firm friends to peace, to pleasure, and good pay,"*

*Trevelyan feels that, all things considered, Clinton was "an unusually capable officer," a judgment that most military historians of the present day will not share. Nonetheless, Clinton's withdrawal across the Jerseys and his encounter with the Patriots at Monmouth Court House were "tough and ungrateful" tasks that severely tested his qualifications as a military leader.*

## CHAPTER XI

### EUROPEAN PUBLIC OPINION.

CHOISEUL.

VERGENNES.

TURGOT

GRAVER news had seldom crossed the Atlantic; although the latest occurrences in America were not closely studied in London, and their full import was understood only by the wise. Hopes had been excited by Burgoyne's first successes, by Howe's victory on the Brandywine, and by the capture of Philadelphia. The catastrophe at Saratoga had been received with disappointment, and with something very nearly approaching to dismay. But Sir Henry Clinton's retirement on New York, which was the most significant event in the whole war, attracted little attention in English society, and scanty comment in the press.

Week after week, and month after month, during the late spring and early summer of 1778, our newspapers gave very meagre information about the British army on the Delaware; for the mind of Britain was already distracted by problems demanding more instant attention, and by dangers much nearer to her own shores. The *Morning Chronicle*, and the *Evening Post*, related the battle of Monmouth Court House at less length than they bestowed upon a sham-fight at the great militia camp which had been formed on Cox Heath, in Kent, to provide against the imminent contingency of a French invasion. Towards the end of July, an anxious public were informed that very heavy firing had been heard off the Lizard. "Yesterday," (so the paragraph ran,) "a report confidently prevailed, which God forbid that a tithe should be true, that Admiral Keppel had been beat in a general engagement."<sup>1</sup> The rumour of a battle was premature; and, when it did take place, it was claimed as an English victory, though among the very poorest in our naval annals; but we may well believe that,

<sup>1</sup> *The London Daily Advertiser*; July 24, 1778.



during a week when home-news of this description floated in the air, men were not inclined to devote much attention, or regret, to the evacuation of Philadelphia.

For two centuries back, on many critical occasions, England's foreign and warlike policy had presented a very noble record. Queen Elizabeth assisted the United Provinces of Holland, in their utmost need, against the bigotry and cruelty of Spain. Oliver Cromwell interfered in Continental matters, with decisive effect, in the interests of justice, humanity, and religious freedom. The war which William the Third fought out to the end, and the subsequent war which he commenced, and which Marlborough prosecuted, were both of them set going with the express object of protecting weak European communities from the unscrupulous and insatiable ambition of Louis the Fourteenth. It was true, indeed, that George the Second's two great wars had been undertaken by the British Cabinet from mixed motives, amongst which national self-interest certainly found a place; but in both cases an honourable, a generous, and a disinterested idea possessed and actuated the great mass of Englishmen. Such an idea unquestionably inspired the exertions and sacrifices made by our forefathers in 1742, and during the five years that followed;—the vast subsidies transmitted to Vienna from the British Treasury; the glorious victory of Dettingen; the still more glorious reverse of Fontenoy; and the visit of Commodore Martin's squadron to the Bay of Naples, which was an exploit conceived, and conducted to a bloodless but triumphant issue, in the very spirit and style of the Great Protector. The main thought and intention of our people in that arduous struggle was a determination to save the young Empress Queen from insult and spoliation, and to prevent the balance of power from being irremediably upset by the ruin and dissolution of Austria. And Chatham's war, which in America and the East secured enormous acquisitions of territory for his country, presented on the Continent of Europe, (and not unjustly,) the appearance of a public-spirited, and even a chivalrous, enterprise. English troops fought loyally and most successfully, and English guineas were not stinted, in order to strengthen the hands of Prussia against the most powerful combination of military States that ever, for so many years together, applied themselves in concert to the business of annihilating a puny neighbour.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Hard words have often been applied to the doctrine of the Balance of Power; but, during the century which followed the Revolution of 1688, that doctrine excited almost as much enthusiasm as was evoked, in the nineteenth century, by the principle of

These striking events, and this all but continuous course of magnanimous policy, had landed England in a position more desirable than has ever been enjoyed by any nation in modern times; and for which a parallel can only be found in the fame and popularity of Athens after she had repelled the Persian invasion, and before she had begun to tyrannise over her Greek allies. When the Seven Years' War came to a termination, the influence of England throughout the Continent of Europe was immense; her power on the high seas was undisputed; and, together with these advantages, she had contrived to retain a large measure of the general good-will. She had drawn the sword so often, and wielded it so efficaciously, on behalf of others, that the governments, which she had protected and rescued on the European mainland, seldom grudged her those provinces and colonies which she had founded, or appropriated, in distant quarters of the globe.

"I shall do well!

The people love me, and the sea is mine;  
My powers are crescent; and my auguring hope  
Says it will come to the full."<sup>3</sup>

England, after the Peace of Paris in 1763, might very fairly have applied to herself these verses of her own greatest poet. Feared and hated by some nations, esteemed and even beloved by others, she was everywhere respected, admired, and imitated. Nowhere was she so obsequiously watched and followed as in the capital city of her ancient, and her most formidable, foe. "What Cromwell wished," (thus Gibbon wrote in March 1763,) "is now literally the case. The name of Englishman inspires as great an idea at Paris as that of Roman could at Carthage after the defeat of Hannibal." The more frivolous of the

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Nationality. The efforts to preserve Europe from the acquisitiveness of France or Austria inspired Englishmen, in the days of Marlborough and Chatham, with the same kind of sympathy as their descendants felt for the Independence of Greece, and the Unity of Italy. Robertson published his *Charles the Fifth* in 1769; and his *Introductory Essay on the Progress of Society in Europe*, which filled the first volume, contains many allusions to the theory of the Balance of Power. The historian apparently regarded that theory as among the most beneficent discoveries of a civilised era. "That salutary system," (thus he described it,) "which teaches modern politicians to take the alarm at the prospect of distant dangers, which prompts them to check the first encroachments of any formidable power, and which renders each state the guardian, in some degree, of the rights and independence of all its neighbours."

<sup>3</sup> *Anthony and Cleopatra*; Act II., Scene I.

French nobility copied and borrowed our simple dress, our less gaudy and far swifter carriages, our games at cards, the implements of our national sports, and the jargon of our race-course,—so far as they could frame their lips to pronounce it. Those among them who were of more exalted nature, and tougher fibre, envied the individual liberty and responsible self-government which prevailed in England, and the opportunities there afforded for a strenuous and worthy public career. The pride of young French gentlemen, (wrote the scion of a great family in Périgord,) was piqued by the contrast between their own situation, and that of men of their age and class beyond the Channel. “Our minds dwelt upon the dignity, the independence, the useful and important existence of an English peer, or of a Member of the House of Commons, and upon the proud and tranquil freedom which appertained to every citizen of Great Britain.”<sup>4</sup>

Such was the towering eminence which Britain proudly occupied; and it is an inevitable condition of national greatness that conspicuous States, on which the attention of mankind is concentrated, have to mind their ways at home, as well as abroad. Small or effete countries may be well or ill governed, their ministers and even their monarchs may come and go, and their constitutions may be reformed or overset, without attracting any considerable amount of observation outside their own confines; but the politics of a people who lead the world are regarded, all the world over, as matter of universal interest and concern. The top-heavy edifice of personal government,—which George the Third, through the instrumentality of Bute, and Grafton, and North, had built up from the foundation,—was a familiar, and not a lovely, phenomenon to educated men in every capital of Europe. All true friends, and some high-minded enemies, of England deplored that the energies of our rulers should be devoted to unworthy, and worse than unprofitable, objects, and witnessed with sincere regret the long roll of sordid and demoralising incidents which marked the trail of the Middlesex Election. It was a sorry spectacle to see the Government

<sup>4</sup> *Mémoires par M. Le Comte de Ségur, de l'Académie Française, Pair de France: Deuxième Edition*, page 140.

A young Englishman of good family, writing in the year 1774, described how he left London, where his father never got back from Parliament till long after midnight, and spent his whole morning correcting his speech for the newspapers; and how in Paris he found men of the highest birth leading a life of unbroken leisure,—calling occasionally on the King's Ministers, to exchange a few compliments, but otherwise knowing as little about the public affairs of France as of Japan.

of a people which had humbled France and Spain, had defended Germany, and had conquered Canada and Bengal, wasting its efficiency and its credit, twelvemonth after twelvemonth, over a miserable squabble with the voters of one very ill-used English county. England, before this, had had her faults and her misfortunes; but since the Revolution of 1688, alone among the principal nations of the world, she had been ruled by strong men who forced their way to the front by prowess in debate, by valuable public services, and by the favourable estimate which their fellow-countrymen formed of their wisdom and capacity. That, however, was the case no longer. Second-rate, and third-rate, place-holders now trifled with the welfare and honour of the country; while their betters were inexorably excluded from office because they were unacceptable to the King. Patriots and statesmen like Edmund Burke, Lord Camden, and Sir George Savile, were left unemployed; and England was governed by such sinister or paltry figures as Sandwich and Rigby, Lord Weymouth and Lord George Germaine.

This disastrous condition of things was vividly brought home to the perception of Europe by the notoriety of Lord Chatham's disfavour at Court. The ex-minister, whose commanding genius had laid France at the feet of England, was incomparably the most highly regarded of English citizens, all the Continent over; and nowhere was that sentiment so pronounced as in France itself. French people of fashion were for ever pestering British tourists for an authentic anecdote about Pitt, or for a few specimen sentences from his latest oration; and the presence during a single evening of one among his kinsmen, or even his parliamentary supporters, was of itself sufficient to make the fortune of any drawing-room in Paris. Lord Chatham's reputation as a public speaker was never so widely diffused as during the later stages of the Wilkes controversy, and the opening scenes of the American Revolution. Magnificent fragments of his rhetoric, dating from that period, are not even yet submerged in the sea of oblivion which, mercifully for human endurance, in most cases drowns the oratory of the past; and samples of his eloquence, while it still was fresh, were freely quoted, and enthusiastically admired, by foreigners who had learned to read our language. And now, at the summit of his fame,—in the prime, as Berlin and Paris believed, of his intellect and his vigour,—he was denied the opportunity of governing his native island, and saving from dismemberment that Colonial empire which he had enlarged and strength-



ened for no other public reason than because he stood, squarely and manfully, for the independence of the British Parliament.<sup>5</sup>

For some years before the American Revolution broke out, the influence of England abroad had been sapped and weakened by the growing deterioration of her internal politics. And now, after a decade marked by maladministration and popular discontent at home, the new methods of government had produced their appropriate fruit in the alienation of our colonies. On that question one and the same view was held by every rational foreigner, and was pointedly expressed by those French writers who then were the recognised interpreters of European thought. "Your ministers," wrote the Abbé Morellet to Lord Shelburne, "have not perceived that, by enslaving and ruining America, they are drying up an abundant source of wealth and prosperity, of which England would always have secured the largest share; for such would have been the happy consequence of natural and unforced relations between a mother-country, and a colony inhabited by a people sprung from her race, and speaking her tongue. Those ministers resemble a territorial landlord who, in order to maintain certain honorary rights which bring him in little or no cash, should make war on his own tenants, impounding their teams and setting fire to their barns, with the result that his farmers would thenceforward be unable to till their fields, and pay their rent." It is true that, in our own day, an author may occasionally be found, in one country or another, who defends the policy of Lord North's cabinet as having been laudable and judicious. But, while the affair was actually in progress, all the civilised world outside our own island held that policy to be wrong and foolish: and it is the opinion of contemporaries, and not of posterity, which has an influence on the issue of the event.

Then came the Declaration of Independence. There exists among mankind an innate disposition to believe that people know their own business best, and a readiness to accept the description which they give of themselves in preference to any which is given of them by others.

<sup>5</sup> While Horace Walpole was at Paris, in the autumn of 1765, his correspondence is full of casual, and occasionally very humorous, allusions to the awe with which William Pitt was regarded in that city. "The night before last," (Walpole wrote to Pitt's sister,) "I went to the Luxembourg; and, *if I had conquered America in Germany*, I could not have been received with more attention." Walpole gave an unlucky Scotch baronet a very bad half-hour by assuring a party of eager, and curious, fine ladies, most untruthfully, that the poor gentleman was an excellent mimic, and could reproduce Pitt's speaking better than any man alive. When the terrible wolf of the Gevaudan was brought dead to Paris, the animal lay in state in the Queen's antechamber, and "was exhibited to us with as much parade as if it was Mr. Pitt."

When America, speaking with an exuberant emphasis which had no example in the State-papers of the Old World, asserted for herself a separate and distinct place among the family of nations, there was a general inclination, all Europe over, to take her at her word, and acknowledge her right to be the arbitress of her own destiny, and the mistress of her own future. The claim which she embodied in her famous manifesto was soon made good by arms. Thrice had Great Britain put forth her full strength against the colonists, and three campaigns had been fiercely contested. In the first campaign King George lost Boston; the second had ended with the defeat of his German auxiliaries at Trenton; and the third had resulted in one of his armies being captured, while the other was driven back into the City of New York. What had hitherto been the suppression of a rebellion now became, in the eyes of foreign critics, the invasion of a country. The conflict was regarded no longer as a civil war, but as a war of conquest: and conquest is never popular except among the conquerors.<sup>6</sup>

The English had hitherto been regarded by other nations as the most sagacious people of modern times. A century and a half of bold and judicious colonisation, and three quarters of a century made notable by a series of amazingly prosperous wars, had secured for them nearly all the outlying districts of the globe that were then worth having. Their proceedings had been characterised by instinctive common-sense, and by obedience to the laws of a broadly considered and sound economy. All those immense enterprises, which they had undertaken and carried through, were well within their compass, and amply repaid them for their ungrudging expenditure of that public money which, at the decisive hour, they never spared. But now, in profound peace, at the height of unparalleled prosperity, they had committed themselves to an internal war against a part of their own empire,—a war marked by all the folly of a Crusade, without the piety,—of which the end must be distant, and the event, whatever shape it might ultimately assume, could not fail to be calamitous to Great Britain. The national reputation for prudence and shrewdness was grievously impaired in the eyes of Europe; and our countrymen had thrown away

<sup>6</sup> Albert Sorel, in his account of the repulse of Brunswick's invasion, makes an interesting allusion to the respect felt in Europe for the young American Republic, after it had successfully endured the baptism of fire:

"Les Français ont supporté l'épreuve décisive, celle qui a fait la ruine des Polonais, et la puissance des Américains. Cette nation a vu les étrangers sur son territoire, et elle est restée unie, inébranlable dans ses idées. Il faut renoncer au fol espoir d'enchaîner une nation entière."

a yet more valuable advantage than that of ranking as the cleverest race in history. The Declaration of Independence had aroused an unusual emotion in the mind of Europe. Jefferson's lofty and glowing phrases resounded through France and Germany in accents strange and novel, but singularly, and even mysteriously, alluring to the ear. The depressed and unprivileged classes in a feudal society, which already had arrived within half a generation of the uprising and overturn of 1789, hailed with delight from across the ocean that audacious proclamation of their own silent hopes and lurking sympathies. In previous wars England had figured as a champion of the weak, and a fearless assertor of the common liberties against the misuse of power by any State, or conspiracy of States; but now, to the sorrow of her admirers, she was committed to the task of crushing the political life out of a group of Republics which, in the view of Europe, had as much right to free and uncontrolled self-government as the cantons of Switzerland. She had forfeited the general respect and esteem which formerly was her portion; and she was to learn ere long that, at a grave conjuncture, respect and esteem are among the most valuable military assets upon which a nation can reckon.

Certain incidents of the American war,—which were forced upon the attention of the European populations, and in some respects very seriously affected their comfort, their security, and their commercial interests,—aggravated that disapproval of King George's policy which they so early, and so generally, felt. The more powerful and self-respecting governments blamed and despised those petty princes who had sold their troops for service against our revolted colonists; while all civilians, and almost all true soldiers, were profoundly shocked by the cruelty and injustice inseparable from the traffic. "The Anspach and Bayreuth regiments were put on board boats at Ochsenfurt; but so closely packed that many of the men had to stand up all night. We sang hymns, and had prayers. The next day, many of the men threatening to refuse, the non-commissioned officers were ordered to use heavy whips to enforce obedience, and later to fire on the malcontents, so that some thirty were wounded." That is the account given by no political agitator, but by a musketeer who served King George bravely, and not at all reluctantly, throughout the later years of the American war.<sup>7</sup> It was little wonder if such scenes as these,—occurring along the

<sup>7</sup> *Stephen Popp's Journal*, 1777-1783; published by Joseph G. Rosengarten, After relating the mournful and clamorous partings between the young villagers, and the parents from whom they were torn, the writer goes on to say: "Some of the soldiers were glad, and I was of their number, for I had long wanted to see something of the world."

main roads of Europe, and on the banks of her navigable rivers, at a time when there was peace within her own borders,—filled quiet, kindly citizens with pity and disgust. The Margrave of Anspach, who had been called in to quell the mutiny, escorted his troops to the seaport where they were embarked for New York; and it is on record that he was hooted by mobs, and pelted with reproachful epithets, in the streets of every Dutch town which he traversed on his homeward journey.

So it was on land; and, in the department of maritime affairs, the American war speedily kindled burning questions which flared up into something not far short of a universal conflagration. The sudden and complete extinction of the great, the increasing, and the exceptionally profitable trade between England and her colonies opened out an enticing prospect to the cupidity of foreign manufacturers and foreign ship-owners. Warlike stores rose at once to famine prices in America; and, if the rebellious colonies had not the hard dollars wherewith to pay those prices, at any rate there was plenty of Virginian tobacco which might be exported as a substitute for gold and silver. The multitude of New England sailors, who in former wars had helped to man British fleets, now shipped themselves on board the privateers which preyed upon British commerce. Privateering on a large scale, and in distant waters, is impracticable unless captains of predatory vessels can find a port in which they are allowed to sell their prizes; and such ports, situated in the European territories, or the colonial dependences, of France, and Spain, and Holland, were soon placed at the disposal of the American corsairs with the connivance of the local authorities. Under these circumstances the British Government had recourse to their own interpretation of the code which regulated the power of naval search, and the enforcement of naval blockades. They insisted upon a large, and in some cases a very disputable, extension of the list of articles included in the category of Warlike Stores; and their narrow and rigid definition of the immunities to be enjoyed by neutral vessels was much more agreeable to the captains of their own frigates than to Dutch, or Danish, or Scandinavian, or Russian ship-owners and ship-masters. Britain, in all particulars, revived and put in practice the extreme theory of her maritime rights; and such was the nature of the world-wide contest in which she was engaged that it was difficult for her, if not impossible, to allow those rights to sleep.

Every week that sped,—and, as the war progressed, almost every day,—brought the news of some high-handed act on the one side, and some



flagrant breach of the impartiality due from non-combatants on the other. On the deep seas, at the mouth of a Baltic estuary, or off the bar of a West Indian harbour, transactions were passing which continually added fuel to the flame of international resentment. The British people, sometimes with more anger than uneasiness, saw one European neighbour after another converted into an overt enemy, or, at best, into a malevolent and bitterly prejudiced umpire. Before the close of 1780 she was at war with three of the naval Powers; and the others had drawn themselves together into a league which called itself The Armed Neutrality, but which had very little that was neutral about it outside the title. Portugal alone retained,—and, (grateful little nation that she was,) for a long time ventured to manifest,—her ancient predilection for our country; but the pressure at length became too strong for her fidelity, and Portugal threw in her lot with the rest. Benjamin Franklin could truthfully write from Paris that England had no friends on that side of the Straits of Dover, and that no nation wished her success, but rather desired to see her effectually humbled. Nor was disapprobation of Lord North's action in America confined to Continental, or to foreign, lands; for that sentiment had long been dominant in Ireland. The Catholics indeed, so far as in their sad and depressed condition they had any politics at all, were mostly for King George as against the Whig opposition and the Philadelphia Congress. But, throughout all the four Irish provinces, the coercion of New England was intensely distasteful to the public opinion of the governing classes; and in that century, and that country, Protestant and Landlord opinion alone counted. "I heard t'other day," said Horace Walpole, "from very good authority that all Ireland was 'America mad.' That was the expression. It was answered: 'So is all the Continent.' Is it not odd that this island should, for the first time since it was five years old, be the only country in Europe in its senses?"<sup>8</sup>

By the time that our American rebellion had lasted a twelvemonth, Great Britain could not count upon any friend, or any possible ally, among the leading European nations; while the most powerful of them all was her busy and irreconcilable enemy. France, for a long while back, had been in that mood which renders a proud and gallant people the most dangerous of neighbours to a victorious rival. Chatham, and his English, had wrenched away her colonies, had expelled her from North America, and had ousted her from any prospect of influence or

<sup>8</sup> Walpole to the Countess of Ossory; Strawberry Hill, June 25, 1776.

empire in the peninsula of Hindostan. Her troops had been often and disgracefully beaten, her squadrons driven off the ocean, her commerce annihilated, and her finances ruined. Her consciousness of inferiority was kept alive by the humiliations to which she was subjected in her intercourse with other Powers. She was still obliged in one of her own home ports, to endure the presence and the supervision of a British Commissioner, whose duty it was to assure himself that no fortifications were erected on the front which faced the sea.<sup>9</sup> So weak that she could not insist upon her right to take a hand in the game of European diplomacy, she was forced to overlook and condone the lucrative iniquities which, in the black and shameful year of 1772, Russia, Austria, and Prussia combined to perpetrate at the expense of a feeble and unhappy nation. It was impossible, (said Lafayette,) for Frenchmen of a later generation even to conceive the political and military nullity to which their country had been reduced by the Seven Years' War, and by her enforced acquiescence in the partition of Poland.

France had suffered terribly, and had been stripped bare; but she had learned self-knowledge in the school of misfortune, and was quietly and resolutely intent upon recovering the self-respect which she had lost. The more thoughtful and capable among her statesmen, her sailors, and her soldiers were assiduously engaged in amending the discipline, and increasing the fighting strength, of her fleets and armies. The master-workman in the task of national recuperation and reconstruction was the Duc de Choiseul. A politician, who aspires to be a ruler, must travel towards his goal by the avenues which are in customary use in his own country, and among his own contemporaries; and Choiseul had risen to the summit of affairs,—as openly and avowedly as an English nobleman would set himself to gain place and power by making speeches in Parliament,—through the good graces of a Royal mistress. He was a prime favourite, and a most serviceable partisan, of Madame de Pompadour; but none the less was he a genuine patriot. He had his full share in the onerous responsibility of starting the Seven Years' War, and he did not greatly shine in the conduct of it; but he had taken to heart the stern lessons which that war had taught. In 1761,—the mid period of the struggle, when the naval power of France had already been destroyed,—Choiseul, with rare foresight and fixity of purpose, commenced the building of war-

<sup>9</sup> A stipulation to this effect with regard to the port of Dunkirk, dating from the Peace of Utrecht, was revived and reëstablished in the year 1763 by a special article in the Treaty of Paris.

vessels on an extensive scale, and continued to build with redoubled vigour after hostilities terminated. By the year 1770 sixty-four French sail of the line, and fifty frigates were actually afloat.<sup>10</sup> When once the ships were provided, there was no lack of men. Colbert had long ago devised, and Choiseul had now perfected, an accurate register of the entire sea-going population; and a rigorous, but equitable, conscription obviated the necessity of the press-gang, and supplied the war-fleet with the very pick and flower of French sailors. A matter of hardly less importance, when dealing with an element where, after seamanship has done its very utmost, cannon must decide the day, was the organisation of a marine artillery; and the French Admiralty in 1767 enlisted a body of ten thousand naval gunners, "systematically drilled once a week during the ten years still to intervene before the next war with England."<sup>11</sup>

Choiseul's ships were built to encounter the battle and the storm, and they were handled by officers who understood and loved their calling. Unwarmed by the beams of Court favour, and patient and loyal under the vexation of cruelly slow promotion, they were as blunt and rough, as brave and manly, and as whole-hearted in their devotion to duty, as the heroes of Tobias Smollett's naval stories. True sea-dogs, or rather sea-wolves, (for so their countrymen preferred to call them,)<sup>12</sup> they knocked about the Gulf of Lyons and the Bay of Biscay in all weathers, and on every sort of errand. According to their notion it was better for King Louis that he should lose a few spars and top-sails, or even an occasional ship's company of sailors, than that his frigates should lie safe and idle in harbour with inexperienced captains, and crews who were no better than landsmen. And so it came about that the French marine was never so efficient, before or since, as at the commencement of the war which arose out of the American Revolution; while the sea power of Great Britain had been brought down to a very low point by the incompetence and heedlessness of the British Cabinet. Lord North and Lord Sandwich starved the dockyards, and reduced the seamen, at a time when they were pursuing a Colonial policy which plunged their country into a desperate contest with all the other great navies of the world. Howe and

<sup>10</sup> *Histoire de La Marine Française*, par E. Chevalier; Livre I., Chapitre 2.

<sup>11</sup> Mahan's *Influence of Sea Power upon History*; Chapter 9. *Chevalier*; Préface, Livre I.

<sup>12</sup> The Memoirs of the Duc des Cars give a most interesting picture of his valiant brother, who was "un vrai loup de mer, et d'une nature extrêmement sec."

Rodney, by consummate strategy and splendid victories, at length restored the maritime supremacy of England; but, during the space of four years, the French fleets and squadrons, commanded by zealous and enterprising Admirals,—and in the case of the Bailli de Suffren, by a naval leader of very high quality,—held their own, and something more than their own, in the Mediterranean Sea, and on the Atlantic and Indian oceans.

A scantier measure of success attended Choiseul's efforts to regenerate the army, which had become a veritable hot-bed of privilege, of indolence, and of almost unfathomable incapacity. There was a sharp and striking contrast between the conditions under which Frenchmen served their King on land and on water. The Chevalier des Cars, who afterwards became the Duke, began his career in life as a naval officer; and, as has happened to others, he made all the better soldier for it afterwards. While he was still a sailor, the young fellow injured his health during two hard winters at sea in the narrow quarters, and the ineffable discomfort, of an eighteenth century cruiser. Then he obtained a commission in the Cavalry; and, after a short apprenticeship with his regiment, he repaired to Paris, where he led an agreeable existence amidst a round of theatres and supper-parties, varied by excursions to Versailles with the object of taking part in the royal stag-hunts, and dancing attendance on the Comte d'Artois. The Chevalier was nominated a Colonel of Dragoons within a year and a half of the time when he first joined the army; and, on the evening of the same day, he had the enviable honour of being selected from a crowd of courtiers to hold the candle while the King was undressing. In the meanwhile his elder brother, the Baron des Cars, who had served with credit at sea through the whole of the English war, and had more than once commanded a frigate, still ranked as a plain lieutenant. If the Baron had been a musketeer, or a Gendarme, of the Royal Household he might have been a Major General at five and twenty. All the coveted prizes of a military career were for men, and sometimes even for children, of quality.<sup>13</sup> The upper grades in a French regiment were occupied by Viscounts and Marquises; while the hard work was done by veterans of low degree, and often of great though ill-rewarded merit, who were distinguished from their high-born comrades by the some-

<sup>13</sup> The Comte de Ségur's father commanded a regiment when only nineteen years of age. A son of the Maréchal de Richelieu was made a colonel at seven; and his Major was a boy of twelve.



what ironical appellation of "officers of fortune."<sup>14</sup> It must be admitted that troops so commanded were queer allies for the sturdy and uncompromising Republicans of Connecticut and Massachusetts.

The French army, with all its faults, contained plenty of valour and chivalry; and Choiseul exerted himself to introduce into it any reforms and improvements which were compatible with the aristocratic character of the military hierarchy. Close attention was thenceforward bestowed upon the recruiting, the re-mounts, the drill, the manœuvres, the clothing, and the weapons. Regiments of the line, one and all, were dressed in the same uniform; and in 1777 the infantry were supplied with a type of musket so excellent that, after some alterations in the mechanism, it held its ground through the Napoleonic wars, and up to the middle of the nineteenth century. The new firelock weighed only eleven pounds, which in those days was a miracle of lightness; and when, (as was ordinarily the case in battle,) a soldier dispensed with the ceremony of taking aim, he could discharge five shots a minute.<sup>15</sup> The officers were encouraged to instruct themselves in the tenets of the Potsdam school, which was then supposed to be in possession of all attainable human knowledge relating to the science of war. The great master of that school, however, took very good care that only a few exoteric fragments of his doctrine should be imparted to his foreign disciples. French colonels and generals were at full liberty to borrow the Prussian methods of manipulating troops on parade; but they were allowed to learn from Frederic the Great "nothing except his most elementary and least essential lessons."<sup>16</sup> A French Minister of War, in the enthusiasm of imitation, empowered regimental officers to adopt the German custom of chastising privates with the flat of the sabre; as if that peculiar institution had been the secret of victory at Zorndorf and at Rossbach. Two subalterns of high birth and great promise, who afterwards were admirable soldiers, went so far as to shut themselves up in their lodgings, and belabour each other, turn and turn about, until they had ascertained "the impression made by blows from the flat of the sword upon a strong, brave, and healthy

<sup>14</sup> This invidious system was resuscitated in the French army after the Restoration. Paul Louis Courier, in the year 1820, represents himself as comforting an old Sergeant Major, who had fought under Napoleon, by reminding him that he might some day be an officer. "An officer of fortune!" was the reply. "You little know what that means! I had rather drive a plough than become a lieutenant in my own regiment in order to be bullied by the nobles."

<sup>15</sup> *Bonaparte en Italie*: Felix Bouvier; Chapitre 1, Section 2.

<sup>16</sup> *Memoires par M. Le Comte de Ségur*; Paris, 1825; Tome I., Page 128.

man." The discussion of military problems became the fashion of the day, even beyond exclusively military circles; and a dispute which raged over the question of the attack in column, and the attack in line, aroused almost as keen partisanship in Paris as the musical controversy between the faction of Gluck, and the faction of Piccinni.

Choiseul, with the vigilance of a practised diplomatist, had long watched for an opportunity of bringing about a collision with England. During the later months of 1770 a difficulty arose, in reference to the Falkland Islands, between the British and the Spanish governments; and the Bourbon of Spain was prepared to assert his claim by arms, if the Bourbon of France would back him in the quarrel. Choiseul used every endeavour to prevent an amicable settlement, and to create a war; but his day of Court favour, and backstairs influence, was past and gone. The bright, particular star which was then dominant,—the cynosure by which every wary French statesman was careful to steer his course,—shone with a pacific, and not with a red and angry, lustre. Madame de Pompadour, in days gone by, had consented to plunge France into war if only the Empress of Austria would call her cousin. But Madame du Barry, unlike her more ambitious predecessor, was frankly and contentedly disrespectable. Unable to induce as many as six French ladies of rank to visit her, she entertained no hope whatever of being admitted into the family of European sovereigns.<sup>17</sup> She detested Choiseul as a serious man, and a masterful minister; as a kill-joy in the class of society which frequented her apartments; and as an advocate of large armaments, and of an open breach with England. Madame du Barry had learned just enough of politics to be aware that a war would cost a great deal of money, and would render it less easy for her to lay her hands on the millions of crowns which were indispensable to her jovial, and prodigal, existence. She made up her mind that Choiseul should go; and a change of government was effected by that process which France, in the reign of Louis the Fifteenth, regarded as the strict constitutional method. The King's mistress said a word to an Abbé who had access to the royal ear; the Abbé suggested a course of action to the King; and the King summoned the minister into his presence, and demanded an account of the international situation. When Choiseul had expounded his policy, his sovereign's face "became livid, and he cried out in a fury, 'Monsieur, I have told you that I would not have a war.'" Choiseul was dismissed

<sup>17</sup> Walpole's *Memoirs of the Reign of George the Third*; Volume IV., Chapter 8.

from office; the disagreement about the Falkland Islands was patched up; and a belief that peace was secured, until the throne of France had another occupant, universally prevailed in Paris, and in London likewise. At Brooks's club, in May 1774, Mr. Edward Foley betted Mr. Charles Fox fifty guineas that England would be at war with France "before this day two years, supposing Louis the Fifteenth dead." Almost in the same month, the same view was expressed by a much greater man. "I little thought," (so Lord Chatham wrote from his Somersetshire home,) "that I should form daily wishes for the health and life of His Most Christian Majesty. I believe now that no French subject of the masculine gender prays so devoutly for the preservation of his days as I do, in my humble village. I consider the peace as hanging on this single life, and that life not worth two years' purchase."

If wars of retaliation can be staved off during a sufficient period of time, the most passionate aspirations for reprisal and revenge may die away, and be succeeded by friendlier sentiments. That, within our own experience, has been the case with the French Republic and the German Empire; and the same circumstances might have produced the same happy effect on the relations between France and England in the generation which followed the conclusion of the Peace of Paris. Frenchmen, smarting under recent defeat, cherished the notion of a fresh appeal to the ordeal of battle; but prudence kept them quiet. The warlike power of Great Britain was enormous; and the British colonies in America, growing rapidly in wealth and population, were more than ever capable of contributing, in the day of need, a most formidable addition to the naval and military strength of the mother-country. If only the concert between the whole English-speaking race, on both sides of the Atlantic, remained unbroken, France might in the end have accepted the accomplished fact, and diverted her energies from the preparations of war to the pursuits of peace. But the statesmanship of George the Third's ministers proved unequal to the task of keeping the national inheritance bound together in voluntary and indissoluble union; and the revolt of our colonies afforded an irresistible temptation to the martial ardour, and the patriotic resentment, of the French army and the French people.

When the Americans flew to arms in the early months of 1775, there was already a new reign in France; and there was a new France

also. Nothing so instantaneous, nothing so exceptional and peculiar in its character, as the intellectual Renaissance which immediately followed upon the death of Louis the Fifteenth has occurred in any age or country. The influence of the movement was most visible in the privileged class; but that class was a nation in itself, for it included a hundred and forty thousand men and women, belonging to at least five and twenty thousand noble families.<sup>18</sup> Never, (wrote a most able historian,) did a generation attain its majority with an equipment of ideas and impressions more utterly opposed to those of their parents than the sons of the French nobility during the opening years of Louis the Sixteenth's reign.<sup>19</sup> It was a generation which had read, or at all events had bought, the *Encyclopædia*; which derived its views on public right and public policy from Montesquieu, its emotions and aspirations from Rousseau, and its theology from the *Philosophical Dictionary* of Voltaire. Frenchmen of good family, who survived the great Revolution, looked regretfully and wistfully back to the artificial, irresponsible, and the intensely enjoyable lives which they led towards the beginning of the fourth quarter of the eighteenth century. Unobservant of the ominous fact that doctrines, with which they amused themselves as a pastime, had permeated those vast masses of their less fortunate dependents and inferiors to whom Freedom, and Equality, and Justice were terms fraught with very serious meaning indeed, the younger nobles, fearless about the future, extracted the quintessence of all that was delightful from every phase and aspect of the present. On their country estates, among their peasants, and land-stewards, and game-keepers, they still retained a substantial remnant of feudal power. At Versailles they basked in the sunshine of the Court, and secured their share of places, and pensions, and promotions. When they repaired to the camp, the mere possession of a great name placed them in the highest ranks of the military service. And meanwhile they held themselves free to mingle, at Parisian supper-tables, with all that was brilliant in untitled circles on terms of a pleasant imitation of plebeian equality. That is the picture drawn long afterwards by one of their own number. "We passed," (so the Comte de Ségur wrote,) "the short years of our spring-time in a round of illusions. Liberty, royalty, aristocracy, democracy, ancient prejudices, bold and unfettered thought, novelty and privilege, luxury and philosophy,—everything conspired

<sup>18</sup> *L'Ancien Régime*, par H. Taine, de l'Académie Française; Chapitre II., Section I.

<sup>19</sup> Doniol's *History*; Volume I., Page 635.



to render our days happy; and never was a more terrible awakening preceded by sweeter sleep, and by more seductive dreams.”<sup>20</sup>

The solitary grievance of these young patricians was that they were excluded from the government of the State; for it was an established tradition in the French Court that age and wisdom went together. Youth pushed its way everywhere outside the royal Council-Chamber, which was closed against all except elderly Ministers. But the members of the rising generation had, in truth, little reason to complain. They were not fully cognisant of their own power. As individuals they were, indeed, kept outside the administration; but their influence as a class, for good or evil, was nothing short of omnipotent. The active force in French politics which alone mattered, and before which, in the last resort, the monarch and his advisers were compelled to bow, was the public opinion of the fashionable world; and, in June and July 1775, the current of that opinion ran with a vehemence and unanimity which carried all before it. Events were taking place at Boston and Philadelphia which usurped the attention, and touched the imagination, of everyone who had a thought to spare from his own selfish pleasures. The older men, whose animosity towards England had been embittered by two desperate wars, and by the sacrifices and ignominies of a dishonourable peace, caught eagerly at so unique a chance of inflicting a deadly wound on the pride and strength of the hereditary enemy. The younger men were all on fire to go crusading to America. Dependent on their parents for a fixed allowance, which seldom left them with cash in pocket, they contrasted their own position with the good fortune of Lafayette, who had come into his property early, and who was able to charter his own ship, and select his own companions in arms. They envied even such unlucky heroes as Pulaski and Kosciusko, who, after the ruin of their national cause at home, had shaken the dust of Poland from their feet, and gone across the western ocean to fight for the liberty of others. The tidings of Lexington reached the Baths of Spa at the precise period of midsummer when the great world had assembled to take the waters. That town was then “the coffee-house of Europe,” to which French ladies and gentlemen resorted on a pretext of health, but in reality for the purpose of maintaining relations with those important people of other coun-

<sup>20</sup> *Mémoires par M. Le Comte de Ségur*; Tome I., Page 27. Such, in its essence, was the life of the great English Whigs during the first half of the nineteenth century. “What enviable men you are!” said a French politician to the owners of Bowood and Castle Howard. “You dwell in palaces, and you lead the people.”

tries who, in the eighteenth century, combined to form one immense aristocracy of birth and fashion. When the fighting began at Boston it was a strange and novel spectacle to see "the representatives of every European kingdom united by a lively and friendly interest in subjects who had risen in revolt against a King."

Almost everyone, who was somebody, in Paris or at Versailles, had American sympathies; and nobody was at pains to conceal them. The new reign had relaxed the springs of despotic authority, had unpeopled the Bastille, and had set all tongues free to criticise and argue. The courtiers were not afraid of the King; and other members of the royal family were afraid of the courtiers, who seldom failed to impose their own view of politics upon those above them. The Comte d'Artois had been powerfully affected by the craze which was known as Anglo-mania. He is said to have evinced his respect and esteem for our nation by refusing to make bets with any except Englishmen; and that was no barren or valueless compliment, for he had sometimes lost as much as six thousand Louis d'or at a single race-meeting.<sup>21</sup> And yet, as soon as the frequenters of the *Céil de Bœuf* began to take sides,—or, more properly speaking, to take one side,—in the American controversy, the Comte d'Artois, Prince of the Blood though he was, had no choice but to sink his English proclivities, and declare himself a "Bostonian" with the rest. The young Queen had not been educated as a patroness of rebels. She was brought up by a mother who, of all sovereigns that ever lived, was perhaps the most indefatigable and conscientious assertor of the doctrine that people should stay quietly where their rulers had placed them. Marie Antoinette's favourite brother, and the only person on earth of her own generation by whom she would submit to be lectured, was the Emperor Joseph the Second; and Joseph regarded a monarch who encouraged disaffection in the British colonies as a traitor to his own caste. When an attempt was made to enlist his good-will on behalf of the American insurgents, he coldly replied that his vocation in life was to be an aristocrat. But the influence of her Austrian family over the Queen's mind was not strong enough to preserve her from the contagion of the new ideas. Her most intimate associates had always been women; and the warmest advocates of American liberty were to be found among a sex which never is half-hearted in partisanship. "Woman," (wrote a French historian under the Second Empire,) "in our sad day the prime agent of reaction, then showed herself young and ardent, and out-stripped the men in

<sup>21</sup> *London Evening Post* of February 1777.

zeal for freedom.”<sup>22</sup> Marie Antoinette obeyed the impulse which pervaded the society around her, and threw herself into the movement with frank and vivid enthusiasm. Long afterwards, when the poor lady had fallen upon very evil days, one of her determined political antagonists expressed himself as bound by justice and gratitude to acknowledge that “it was the Queen of France who gave the cause of America a fashion at the French Court.”<sup>23</sup>

The warlike emotions which agitated the public mind exhaled themselves, as such emotions always do, in angry and contemptuous reflections on the apathy and timidity of the government. The French Ministers, however, were prepared to extract the utmost advantage from a situation which they understood very much better than any of the fine ladies and gentlemen who were inveighing against their excess of caution and their culpable indifference to the honour of the country. The responsible rulers of France had taken their measures silently, vigorously, adroitly, and most unscrupulously; and they had no objection whatever to being accused of backwardness, and even of pusillanimity, by foolish and noisy people outside the Cabinet. The war of aggression against England, which they had in contemplation, was so flagrantly unjustifiable, and so entirely unprovoked, that they were willing to present the appearance of having been driven into violent courses by an outburst of popular clamour and passion. The philosophical circles of Paris might be in a whirl of cosmopolitan excitement about the emancipation of a people from its tyrants, and the universal brotherhood of the human race; but the official advisers of Louis the Sixteenth descried in the American rebellion nothing except an opportunity for promoting the national interests of France, and for maiming and enfeebling the British Empire. That had been the central object of French statesmanship for three generations back; and the Prime Minister, the Comte de Maurepas, who had already passed his seventy-third birthday, was of an age which inclined him to pursue a continuous foreign policy. The old courtier saunters across the early pages of Carlyle’s *French Revolution* under the guise of a frivolous votary of wit and pleasure; “his cloak well adjusted to the wind, if so be he may please all persons.” That is the conventional portrait of Maurepas which posterity has accepted, in his own country and in ours. Nevertheless there was a more serious side to his character. Through the whole of a long life he never trimmed or trifled over any question

<sup>22</sup> *Histoire de France* par J. Michelet; Tome XIX., Chapitre 14.

<sup>23</sup> Paine’s *Rights of Man*.

connected with the efficiency of the French fleet and army; and he had been an early, and a persistent, naval reformer under rebuffs and discouragements which would have daunted an insincere or a timid man. In 1776 the edge of his patriotism remained as keen as ever; but his power of work was impaired, and his bodily force abated. The burden of the crisis rested on the very capable shoulders of a younger colleague.<sup>24</sup>

The Comte de Vergennes had been French Ambassador at Constantinople when the Peace of Paris was signed. He felt the defeat of his country as men feel a grave personal misfortune. But his patriotic concern and mortification did not sink to the level of despair; for already, with rare sagacity, he detected a possible rift in the imposing fabric of the British Empire. He foresaw and foretold, from the very first moment, the consequences which would infallibly result from the cession of Canada. So long as the English colonists had France for their neighbour,—harassing them with raids, inciting the Indians to ravage their villages, and building forts and blockhouses up to the very edge of their frontier, and sometimes even within it,—they could not afford to dispense with the aid and protection of the mother-country. But the French power had been up-rooted from America. England, by her own act, had destroyed the only check which kept her Transatlantic subjects in awe; and if ever, from that time forward, she ill-treated or offended them, they would reply by throwing off their dependence. So Vergennes had specifically prophesied; and, at the very moment when his prescience was justified by the event, he found himself Foreign Minister of France, with the secret strings of diplomacy in his grasp; enjoying the unlimited confidence of his aged chief; and controlled by no one except a youthful king who was too obtuse to detect all that his Ministers were engaged in doing, and far too shy to rebuke them roundly for anything rash or unprincipled which they had actually done. Carlyle describes Vergennes as sitting

<sup>24</sup> “Malgré son âge,” (so Doniol says of Maurepas,) “il restait l’homme par qui avait été opérée autrefois la reconstitution de la Marine en vue de tenir tête à la Grande Bretagne, et de faire reprendre, un jour ou l’autre, à France sa part de l’empire des mers.” The passage which follows this sentence contains a most interesting comparison between the actual, and the legendary, Maurepas.

“The ablest man I knew,” wrote Horace Walpole, “was the old Comte de Maurepas. . . . Madame de Pompadour diverted a large sum that Maurepas had destined to re-establish their Marine. Knowing his enmity to this country, I told him, (and the compliment was true,) that it was fortunate for England that he had been so long divested of power.” Walpole’s *Memoirs of the Reign of George the Third*; Volume II., Chapter 2.



at his desk "in dull matter of fact, like a dull punctual clerk;" but it is well for the tranquillity of Europe that such clerks do not often find their way to the top of the French Foreign Office. He was, in truth, a statesman with will and energy, who was always possessed by two absorbing ideas, the concurrent force of which impelled him towards his goal through a wilderness of obstacles, and over a mountain of almost superhuman labour. He could not feel at peace with himself until his country had recovered her rank among the nations of the world; and his policy was habitually inspired by intense and implacable hostility to England.

Then French Ministers were strongly disposed to assist and protect the American insurgents; but they had a mortal terror of the British navy. They could not forget their experience of 1755, when they were taught, with no desire for a repetition of the lesson, that the mistress of the seas had a rough, and an over-prompt, way of dealing with an intruder on her own element. In the summer of that year, before ever war had been declared between the two nations, Boscawen attacked and scattered a French squadron of battle-ships, and Hawke brought into British ports three hundred French trading vessels, and lodged six thousand French sailors in British prisons.<sup>25</sup> And now, in the spring of 1776, the advisers of Louis the Sixteenth were haunted by an apprehension that, if France showed her hand prematurely, England, and the English colonies, would hasten to make up their family quarrel, and would celebrate their reconciliation by joining together in an attack upon the French possessions in the West Indies. King Louis was solemnly and repeatedly warned by his diplomatic agents in London that Lord Chatham, the idol of his compatriots on both sides of the Atlantic, would mediate between the Crown and Congress, and would be recalled to power as Prime Minister. He would have at his disposal,—equipped for a campaign, inured to battle, and assembled at a convenient spot for embarkation,—the Boston garrison of ten thousand British regulars, and a host of New England minute-men and Virginian sharp-shooters; while sixty vessels of the Royal Navy, and a swarm of colonial privateers, were afloat on American waters, ready and eager to bombard French ports, and to make prizes of French merchantmen. Long before any reinforcements could arrive from Brest or Rochefort, the famous English war minister would sweep the French from Saint Domingo, and Martinique, and Guadeloupe, and

<sup>25</sup> Mahan's *Influence of Sea Power*; Chapter 8.

all the rest of the Greater and Lesser Antilles, just as, half a generation previously, he had swept them out of Canada.<sup>26</sup>

That prospect, formidable as it looked, did not deter Vergennes from the purpose upon which his mind was set; but he thought it prudent, for the time being, to mask his operations by an artful system of underhand manœuvres. Disguising a flagrant breach of international good faith under the specious name of patriotic caution, he drew up a paper of Considerations on the Policy which should be pursued by the Governments of France and Spain; and, on the twelfth of March 1776, he communicated the document to King Louis, and to his own four principal colleagues in the Cabinet. It was essential, (he wrote,) to persuade George the Third that the intentions of the two Bourbon Powers towards England were not only pacific, but positively friendly, in order that the English ministry might be emboldened to entangle themselves, too deep for retreat, in a fierce, a dubious, and a most exhausting war against their own colonists. The courage of those colonists, on the other hand, would have to be "sustained by secret favours" from France. They should be supplied furtively, but generously, with arms and money, and informed that, while it was below the dignity of the French King to treat openly with insurgents, His Majesty was disposed to recognise them as allies if they ventured upon the decisive step of renouncing their allegiance to the English Crown, and declaring themselves an independent nation.<sup>27</sup>

The Chief of the Cabinet, the Minister of War, and the Minister of the Marine warmly approved the objects that Vergennes had in view, and expressed no repugnance to the means by which he purposed to attain them. But every paragraph in the Foreign Secretary's memorandum was intensely distasteful to the King. Louis the Sixteenth had little inclination to pose as the tutelary genius of a rebellion. "His intuitions, dim as they were," forewarned him that revolutionary principles were among the most portable of all foreign products, and that no ocean was broad enough to preserve European monarchies from being infected by the contagion of American republicanism.<sup>28</sup> Nor could he fail to remember how, a very short while back, and by his own express command, the Comte de Vergennes had emphatically reassured Viscount Stormont, the English Ambassador in France, as to

<sup>26</sup> Doniol; Volume I., Page 69, and elsewhere.

<sup>27</sup> Doniol; Volume I., Pages 272-286.

<sup>28</sup> Bancroft's *History of the United States of America*; Epoch Fourth, Chapter 2.

the intentions and the sympathies of the French Court.<sup>29</sup> The Prime Minister himself, at a subsequent interview with Lord Stormont, spoke still more unequivocally to the same effect. "I and my colleagues," said Maurepas, "are not the men to take advantage of a neighbour's difficulties, and to fish in troubled waters. You may accept it for certain that we are not giving, and will never give, any single article of warlike stores for the use of the rebel army."<sup>30</sup> Louis the Sixteenth, who was acquainted with all that had passed between his own confidential servants and King George's diplomatic representative, recoiled, like a true gentleman, from the notion of striking a foul blow against a brother monarch with whom he professed to be on terms of cordial amity. He was governed, moreover, by a conviction of duty, as well as by a sense of honour. Although of languid will, and inert habits, he none the less was instinctively public-spirited; and by the sincerity of his religious belief, and the rectitude of his personal conduct, he merited his conventional appellation of The Most Christian King. Conscience forbade him to enter upon a course of treachery which could not fail to involve his country in a hazardous and protracted war. Actuated by an unfeigned solicitude for the people committed to his charge, he shrank from wantonly inaugurating, after an interval of only twelve years, another devil's carnival of bloodshed and rapine, of national peril, and of private bereavement, impoverishment, and ruin.

Louis the Sixteenth had good reason to trust his unfavourable judgment of the proposals submitted to him by Vergennes; for his own scruples were shared by as wise and virtuous a minister as ever took part in the councils of any State, whether kingdom or republic, in the modern or the ancient world, Michelet,—the most audacious of historians, who has handled only too freely topics which he would have done much better to leave alone,—relates how, in the darkness of the night, an inner voice addressed to him the warning words: "What man of this generation is worthy to speak of Turgot?"<sup>31</sup> Every author, and not Michelet only, may well feel that it is superfluous, and almost im-

<sup>29</sup> Lord Stormont to Lord Rochford; Fontainebleau, October 31, 1775. Vergennes, "spontaneously, and with the air and manner of a man who utters his honest opinion," informed Lord Stormont that the American rebellion was regarded at Versailles as a calamity; and that, far from desiring to increase the embarrassments of the British Government, the King of France and his Ministers contemplated those embarrassments with extreme regret.

<sup>30</sup> Doniol; Volume I., Pages 198–202.

<sup>31</sup> *Histoire de France*; Volume XIX., Chapter 13.

pertinent, to praise a statesman the bare mention of whose name is in itself a sufficient panegyric. By March 1776, Turgot had for nineteen months been Comptroller of Finances, and, (in far other than the official sense of the term), a keeper of the King's conscience. He had still five years of life before him; and within that time, working at the rate at which he hitherto had worked, he might have brought to completion the vast, but practicable, scheme of public economy, extinction of privilege, unfettered commerce, local self-government, and national education by which he confidently hoped to re-organise the body politic, and to renovate society. If Turgot had not been robbed of his royal master's confidence by the intrigues of those courtiers and nobles whom he was endeavouring to save in spite of themselves, his country would have been guided along quieter paths, an much happier destinies than those which awaited her under Robespierre, and Barras, and Napoleon Bonaparte. France might have escaped untold horrors; and Europe might have been spared an almost interminable series of useless and devastating wars.

Turgot had been a warm, and a very early, friend to the independence of America; which he welcomed in the interests of mankind, and not least for the sake of England.<sup>32</sup> But his first duty was to his own country; and he combated the proposal of a warlike policy with an earnestness inspired by his profound conviction that the whole future of France was involved in the decision which her rulers were now called upon to take. His reply to Vergennes cost him some weeks of thought and labour. It was a masterly production; a voluminous treatise, three quarters of a century in advance of his age, on the philosophy of colonial administration, and at the same time a powerful and persuasive official minute upon the question of the hour. England, (so the argument ran,) would in all likelihood lose her colonies; or, if she succeeded in reconquering them, she would be condemned thenceforward to hold them in subjection at an expense of money, and military resources, which would bind her over, under the most stringent penalties, to keep the peace with her European neighbours and rivals, and more especially with France.<sup>33</sup> Whatever result might ensue, France would be the gainer; and to choose such a moment for a wanton and gratuitous attack upon England was an immeasurable folly, and a signal crime.

<sup>32</sup> Turgot to Doctor Josiah Tucker, the Dean of Gloucester; Paris, September 12, 1770.

<sup>33</sup> "Que nous faisait, dès lors, que l'Angleterre soumit ou non ses colonies insurgentes? Soumises, elles l'occuperaient assez par leur désir de devenir libres, pour que nous n'ayons plus à craindre. Affranchies, tout le système commercial se trouvait changé."



The English ministry had done nothing whatever to invite or provoke a war; and every plan of aggression on the part of France was forbidden by moral reasons, and by considerations of national self-interest more imperious still. The King, (said the Comptroller-General,) was acquainted with the condition of his finances, and knew, better than anyone, what sacrifices and efforts were required to stave off bankruptcy even in time of peace. The first cannon-shot fired against a foreign enemy would scatter to the winds all His Majesty's gracious designs for the better government of France, and for the amelioration in the hard lot of her unhappy peasantry. "An English war," (such was Turgot's conclusion,) "should be shunned as the greatest of all misfortunes; since it would render impossible, perhaps for ever, a reform absolutely necessary to the prosperity of the State and the solace of the people."<sup>34</sup>

Turgot did well to spare no pains over the composition of this historical document, for it was the last important State-paper which he wrote from his official chair. He had made a host of enemies by his bold and uncompromising action in almost every department of public affairs; and yet he was feared and hated, less for what he had done already, than for what he might do next. It was bad enough that the tiller of the soil should be released from the obligation of maintaining roads and highways by his unpaid labour; that the town artisan, emancipated from the shackles of trade monopoly, should be at liberty to carry his skill and industry into the open market; that corn grown in one province should be sold, and exported, with the effect of lowering the price of bread in another; and that tribute should no longer be exacted from government contractors, and Farmers General, by great people about the Court. All this was bad enough, but there was worse behind; for it was a matter of notoriety that "le sieur Turgot," with the innate vulgarity of his birth and breeding, was not alive to the merits of a fiscal system under which the poor and the industrious were bled to the quick, while the rich and the idle "contributed a mere fraction of their substance to the revenue of the State, and then divided among themselves the larger part of its expenditure." Unless a change came over the spirit of the Treasury, the tax-gatherer would soon be knocking, with equal hand, at the castle and the cottage; and salaries and pensions would have to be earned by hard dull work in the service of

<sup>34</sup> Doniol; Volume I., Pages 280-283. *The Life and Writings of Turgot*, edited by Walter Stephens; pages 295-296, and 321-324.

the nation, instead of being distributed among the sons and daughters of leisure, as the reward of sycophancy and importunity.

The case was urgent; and the manipulators of politics had recourse to the machinery by which Ministerial rearrangements had been effected during the late reign, with one very important modification. Female influence was again called into play; but it was the influence of the wife, and not of the mistress. There was an outburst of sinister activity in the closely-banded circle of high-born men and women by whom Marie Antoinette was encompassed, and plundered, and prompted. Turgot was not blind to the perils of his situation. When he first went to the Treasury he had addressed his royal master in plain and honest words. "I shall have," he said, "to struggle even against the goodness and generosity of Your Majesty, and of the persons who are most dear to you." He kept his promise; and the Queen, before very long, became his personal adversary. Her only idea with regard to public money was to get as much as possible of it to spend. However often her lap was filled with gold, and her toilet-case with jewels, she still had unpaid bills which she dared not show to her husband because she knew that her husband dared not show them to his Comptroller General.<sup>35</sup> There was one grudge rankling in her memory which surpassed all others. In an evil hour for herself, and for the object of her misplaced bounty, she had done her utmost, without success, to procure the enormous salary of fifty thousand crowns a year for her favourite, the Princesse de Lamballe; the same ill-fated lady who, in September 1792, heard economic reformers, of a very much fiercer type than Turgot, thundering at the door of her prison. The Austrian ambassador at Versailles, the Comte de Mercy, had been entrusted with the duty of keeping his Empress punctually and faithfully informed as to her daughter's conduct; and the young Queen was exhorted, both by her mother and brother, to abstain from interference in French politics. But her monitors were far away, and her tempters near at hand. Seldom indeed, in all the history of the past, was greater mischief wrought by woman than when Marie Antoinette placed herself at the service of that base and selfish conspiracy for the murder of a noble career, and the destruction of a nation's hopes.<sup>36</sup>

The threatened minister became conscious that the ground was un-

<sup>35</sup> Monsieur de Mercy to the Empress of Austria; July 19, 1776.

<sup>36</sup> Marie Antoinette confessed to her mother that she was not ill pleased by the changes in the ministry, although she herself had not meddled in the matter. De Mercy told Maria Theresa a very different story. It was, (he wrote,) the Queen's full intention to have the Comptroller General turned out from office, and sent straight to the Bastille.

dermined beneath his feet. He stood deserted and alone in the face of danger. Even President Malesherbes, the only colleague with whom he was on terms of sympathy and confidence, resigned office unexpectedly, and, (as regards Turgot,) somewhat shabbily and disloyally. Sixteen years afterwards Malesherbes, with a prospect of the guillotine as his advocate's fee, valiantly defended his fallen sovereign at the bar of the Convention; a conspicuous example that there have been those who find it less terrible to confront death than to defy social unpopularity. Malesherbes retired on the twelfth of May 1776; and, on the same evening, Turgot received a message to the purport that he was no longer Comptroller General. There was joy in the corridors of Versailles; and dowagers, who thought that they wrote like Madame de Sévigné, filled their letters with epigrams upon the fallen minister. But the millions, who toiled and suffered, knew that they had lost their best friend, and their only protector; and all sincere well-wishers to France were overwhelmed by grief, consternation, and a sentiment akin to despair. Condorcet sent Voltaire a melancholy and touching letter, ending with the words: "Adieu! We have had a beautiful dream." "Ever since Turgot is out of place," (Voltaire himself wrote,) "I see only death before me. I cannot conceive how he could be dismissed. A thunderbolt has fallen on my head and on my heart." The announcement of the great Minister's removal from power was everywhere recognized as the death-knell of European peace. "Such men as Turgot," (said Horace Walpole,) "who are the friends of human kind, could not think of war, however fair the opportunity we offered to them. Poor France and poor England!" After the deed was done, King Louis was overcome with shame, and very sad and anxious. "Except myself and Turgot," (so he had been used to say,) "there is no one who really loves the people." Sensible of his own weakness, he foresaw that he would soon be coerced into undoing all the good work which he and his departed servant had accomplished together. And, now that he stood alone against the opinion of his united Cabinet, he felt himself powerless to avert the projected war with England which shocked his conscience, and which in its consequences proved fatal to his reign.

## CHAPTER XII

**BEAUMARCHAIS.  
FREDERIC OF PRUSSIA.  
FRANKLIN IN PARIS.  
THE FRENCH TREATIES**

WHEN Turgot fell from power, Vergennes became undisputed master of the international situation; and he had at his disposal, for carrying out his purposes, an instrument as sharp as ever political craftsman handled. He was in intimate and secret relations with a man who may fairly be described as having led the typical French career of the eighteenth century. Pierre Augustin Caron, born in the Rue Saint-Denis at Paris in the year 1732, was the son of an ex-Calvinist watchmaker who enjoyed the patronage of the Court at Versailles. The younger Caron might often be seen at the Palace on his father's errands. He was greatly noticed for his handsome face and manly bearing, his assured air and dominant manners, and the instinctive impression which he produced on all who met him that, against whatever difficulties and by whatever methods, he intended to carry the world before him. His merits were not lost on the great ladies of the Court; but he had the good sense to try his wings in a low flight, and, by the age of three-and-twenty, he was on the best of terms with the wife of one of the sixteen Clerks of Office of the King's Household, who, as a matter of fact, and in plain words, were the waiters at the royal dinner-table. The husband, already advanced in years, made over his employment to his young friend, and died a few months afterwards. Caron had now a salary of two thousand francs, and enjoyed the privilege of wearing a sword when he brought in the dishes. He married the widow; and from that time forward he signed himself Caron de Beaumarchais, after a small feudal estate which was said to be in the possession of his wife's family. The exact locality of that estate has never been ascertained; but the name was soon famous throughout Europe.



Beaumarchais climbed fast when once his foot was on the ladder. He had the inestimable gift of persuading others to serve him without requiring in return anything except his gratitude. His first wife died within the year, and in due time he married another rich and handsome widow. He had not attained the social rank which qualified for admission among the friends, and personal clients, of Madame de Pompadour; but he contrived to make acquaintance with the gentleman who had been her husband, and he struck up a very close alliance with her confidential man of business. This was Monsieur Du Verney, the eminent capitalist who put Voltaire in the way of obtaining that army-contract which made him the Cræsus of literature, and who was an equally generous patron to Beaumarchais. Du Verney endowed the young fellow with a large sum of money; he indoctrinated him in the secrets of Court finance; and he provided him with funds whenever a lucrative office was for sale which was beyond the compass of his private resources. Beaumarchais was thus enabled to become Secretary to the King, Lieutenant-General of the Parks and Chases, and Captain of the Warren of the Louvre. He laid down half a million francs, at a single payment, in order to buy a place among the Grand Masters of the Lakes and Forests; but on this occasion he had aimed too high, and the other members of the Board refused to be associated with the son of a watchmaker. Beaumarchais declined to intrude where he was not welcome, and avenged himself on his fastidious opponents by a delicious specimen of his sarcastic humour.<sup>1</sup> He was an admirable writer. His prose was always clear and pointed, sometimes remarkably forcible, and often exquisitely graceful; and his verse, which flowed profusely, satisfied the taste of the day. His celebrity owes a very large debt to the genius of others; for his name has been perpetuated by Rossini and Mozart in the two most popular operas, of their own class,

<sup>1</sup> Beaumarchais, the most perfect of sons and brothers, never wrote better than when he was rebuking those who jeered at his family, or attacked his private life. "I own," he said on one occasion, "that nothing can wash away the reproach of having been the son of a watchmaker. I can only reply that I never saw the man with whom I would exchange fathers; and I know too well the value of that time which, in the exercise of our trade, he taught me to measure, to waste any of it in taking notice of such despicable trivialities."

An adversary of Beaumarchais endeavoured to sap his credit with the Comte de Vergennes by accusing him of "keeping girls." Beaumarchais favoured his calumniator with a letter, of which he sent a copy to the Foreign Secretary. "Monsieur," (he wrote,) "the girls whom I have kept for the last twenty years are five in number; my four sisters and my niece. Two of them, to my great sorrow, have lately died; but I likewise support that unhappy father who is unfortunate enough to have given to the world so shameless a libertine as myself."

that ever were exhibited on the stage. Beaumarchais himself was no mean musician. He sang with taste; and played to perfection on the flute, and on the harp, which then was a novelty in Paris. He was a principal performer in the weekly concert given at Versailles in the apartment of those four daughters of Louis the Fifteenth who bore the august title of Mesdames de France.

Beaumarchais breathed freely and easily in the corrupt element by which he was surrounded; but he had in him the making of a greater man if he had lived in greater times. He was something very different from a supple courtier. The Dauphin, who was an abler prince than his unfortunate son, and far more virtuous than his father, said that Beaumarchais was the only person, in and about Versailles, from whom he could learn the truth; and the two famous comedies, the Barber of Seville and the Marriage of Figaro, which were produced at a time when their author was still laboriously mounting the path of advancement, abounded in sharp strokes against the follies of those great folks who had the power to make, or unmake, his fortunes. Beaumarchais, the most brilliant of upstarts, never ceased to be a mark for envy, and for what would willingly have been contempt; but no one then lived with whom it was less safe to trifle. The wounds inflicted by his pen took long to heal; and he possessed the courage of the swordsman as well as of the satirist. He had killed his man in a terrible duel; and, while his reply to an insolent letter was invariably couched in phrases of subtle and refined wit that set all the world laughing, he was pretty sure to conclude with a very significant hint that he was ready to make good his words by push of steel. He was admired and dreaded as the most dexterous and persistent of intellectual gladiators. Never was there such an example made of any offender as Beaumarchais made of Monsieur Goëzman, the Judge who gave a decision unfavourable to his claims, after the Judge's wife had accepted from him a purse of gold. The guilty pair were ruined; and the disappointed suitor emerged from his single-handed conflict against the paramount, and unscrupulously exerted, authority of the Parliament of Paris with the reputation of having approved himself the most irrepressible controversialist in France.<sup>2</sup>

Beaumarchais was now regarded in the highest quarters as too clever

<sup>2</sup> Everything known about Beaumarchais has been told, and well told, in the admirable work entitled *Beaumarchais, et Son Temps, par Louis de Loménie, de l'Académie Française*: Paris, 1855. De Loménie ends his last volume with a very just, and interesting, disquisition on the political eminence, which Beaumarchais might have reached if he had been born in the days of free and constitutional government.

to be wasted, and much too formidable to be left unemployed. Shortly before the death of Louis the Fifteenth he was sent to England, under a feigned name, as a private agent of the French Cabinet. Information had arrived from London that, somewhere in the very lowest and dingiest regions of literature, preparations were on foot for issuing a book which purported to be the secret memoirs of Madame du Barry. Beaumarchais settled the business at a cost in money which greatly exceeded the value of that lady's reputation. He secured and destroyed the manuscript; and three thousand copies of the work were burned in a lime-kiln under his personal supervision. He next bought up, for a still larger price, a mischievous libel upon Marie Antoinette; and his successful conduct of these two negotiations led to his being entrusted with a still more singular commission. He was directed to seek out the Chevalier d'Eon, who then resided in England, and order him in the name of King Louis to dress himself in petticoats, and make a public declaration that he was a woman, which he most certainly was not. The work in which Beaumarchais was engaged during his visit to our island cannot be described as dignified or important; but he found time to spare for matters more worthy of his attention, and not less suited to his very peculiar abilities. He had a lively interest in British politics, which at that time were almost exclusively concerned with the question of America. He rubbed shoulders with men of all parties, and he heard both sides. Lord Rochford, the most approachable among Secretaries of State, made him the companion of his all too numerous lighter hours; and he was sworn brother to John Wilkes, who resembled Beaumarchais as nearly as an Englishman can resemble a Frenchman, in the defects and qualities of his character, and not less in the most remarkable circumstance of his past career. There was not much to choose, whether for praise or blame, between the champion of the Goëzman law-suit, and the hero of the Middlesex election. As soon as the rebellion broke out, Beaumarchais foresaw that the colonists would win; and he entertained a deep and passionate belief that, if France helped them in their hour of need, she would obtain her share in the advantages of their victory. He threw himself into the movement with an energy so masterful that he imposed his views upon the leading members of a Cabinet, which he served in a humble, and even an ignominious, capacity. There is no more instructive instance of the stupendous results which may be accomplished by native force of will, and acute perception of the right moment for vigorous action, than the story of the adventurer who, with no recognised official position, and three

aliases to his name, never hesitated or rested until he had set France and England by the ears.

The potent influence exercised by Beaumarchais over the decisions of the French Government is a strange phenomenon, but not altogether inexplicable to those who have been behind the scenes in politics. A private individual, with a message of his own to deliver, finds it very difficult to get a hearing in official quarters. But, if once he has been accepted as an adviser, he has every chance of making his opinion felt; for he speaks with a freedom of conviction, and novelty of phrase, refreshing to overworked statesmen depressed and dulled by the sense of responsibility, who are tired of discussing an affair of State among themselves, and who know each other's arguments by heart. Beaumarchais twice addressed the Royal Council at Versailles in a strain of fiery and picturesque eloquence which no Cabinet Minister, that ever lived, would venture to inflict upon his own colleagues. His line of reasoning was artfully adapted to the pacific temperament of Louis the Sixteenth, and to his unambitious aspirations for the welfare and tranquillity of his people. The American rebellion, (so Beaumarchais wrote,) must terminate, if left to itself, in a complete victory for England, or for the revolted colonies; and in either of those contingencies France would inevitably, and almost immediately, find herself plunged into a sanguinary, and frightfully expensive, war. The only possible means of averting such a catastrophe was to maintain an equilibrium between the two contending parties by surreptitiously helping the insurgents, during the first stage of the conflict, with arms and ammunition. That transaction should be so conducted as not to compromise the French Government; and, if His Majesty required the services of a devoted agent, Beaumarchais himself was prepared to accept the office, and to compensate for lack of ability by zeal, fidelity, and discretion. "Believe me, Sire," (he said,) "when I assure you that the mere preparations for a first campaign would be more onerous to your Treasury than the whole amount of those modest succours for which Congress now petitions; and that the paltry and melancholy saving of a couple of million francs at the present moment will cost you three hundred millions before two years are over."<sup>3</sup> In his private correspondence with the ministers, Beaumarchais was much less respectful to his Sovereign; and he did not scruple to say plainly that, in small things and in great, Louis the Sixteenth never had, and never would have, a

<sup>3</sup> *Mémoire remis au Roi cacheté, par M. de Sartines le 21 Septembre, 1775. Mémoire remis à M. le Comte de Vergennes, cachet volant, le 29 Février, 1776.*



mind of his own. He recalled to Maurepas how that amiable and docile Prince had sworn that he would not allow himself to be inoculated; and how, a week after the oath was taken, he had the germ of the small-pox in his arm. "Everyone," said Beaumarchais, "knows how the case stands between the King and yourself; and no one will excuse you, if you cannot persuade His Majesty to adopt those high designs on which your own soul is intent." <sup>4</sup>

Such letters, in any previous reign, might have lodged the writer in the Bastille, and consigned the minister to disgrace and exile; but Maurepas and Vergennes stood in no awe whatever of Louis the Sixteenth, and they were impressed and fascinated by Beaumarchais. He had proposed himself as an intermediary between Philadelphia and Versailles; and he was promptly taken at his word. In June 1776 the Foreign Secretary handed him an order on the French Treasury for a million francs; and, two months afterwards, another million was transmitted to him by the Court of Madrid. From Spain he also borrowed a title for the fictitious house of business under cover of which he traded; and purchases were made, and ships chartered, on behalf, not of Caron de Beaumarchais, but of Roderigo Hortalez and Company. It was a favoured firm, whose buyers found means to procure surplus military stores in great quantity, and excellent condition, from the public arsenals of France; together with a large number of cannons and mortars cast in the royal gun-factories, on which, by a convenient oversight, the authorities had omitted to stamp the royal arms.<sup>5</sup> The custom-house people, and the officers of the port, at Havre and Nantes had at first been troublesome and inquisitive; but in January 1777, after the arrival of a government courier from Paris, they stopped asking questions about any vessels, bound for an unknown destination, which had been taking suspicious cargoes on board. Half a score of merchantmen, ostensibly belonging to Hortalez and Company, were presently on their way to America; and, in the course of the next few weeks, three ship-loads of muskets and gunpowder, together with clothing and footgear for five-and-twenty thousand soldiers, were landed at Portsmouth in New Hampshire "amidst acclamations, and clapping of hands, from an immense multitude of spectators." Only a very short time had elapsed since the Comte de Vergennes, in the name of his monarch, had con-

<sup>4</sup> *Mémoire de Beaumarchais, remis au Comte de Maurepas le 30 Mars, 1777.*

<sup>5</sup> This circumstance is stated in a conversation between the Duke of Grafton and Lord Weymouth, reported in the ninth chapter of the *Autobiography and Political Correspondence of the Duke of Grafton*, Edited by Sir William Anson.

gratulated the English ambassador on the capture of Rhode Island by the English navy; and the Foreign Secretary had thought fit to add, on his own account, that he had heard the good news with an emotion of "true sensibility."<sup>6</sup> They little knew our country who imagined that she could be tricked and flouted with impunity. It was a matter of absolute certainty that now, as at other periods of her history, she would encounter secret treachery by open resort to arms. That million of francs, by the judicious and timely disbursement of which the French Ministry had hoped to inflict a mortal injury on the British power with small cost and danger to themselves, had grown, before the affair was finally settled, into a war expenditure of something very near a milliard and a quarter; and the royal government of France, which had stooped to such unroyal practices, was submerged in an ocean of bankruptcy where it was destined miserably to perish. That was what came of an attempt to fight England on the cheap.<sup>7</sup>

The ablest monarch on the Continent of Europe was an unsparing critic of the British policy, and a personal enemy of the British sovereign; but he was wise enough, and old enough, to regulate his animosity by a prudent and rather selfish caution. Frederic of Prussia had already reached his grand climacteric. He was prematurely aged in looks and in health; a broken man, if the body could have subdued the soul. But there was tempered steel within that frayed and battered sheath; and his spirit was unquenched, his will firm, and his wit keen and biting. In October 1775 he had been prostrated by the most severe illness from which he ever rose alive. The British ambassador at Berlin reported him to his Court as dying; and the French accounts exaggerated his physical weakness, (to use Frederic's own martial metaphor,) as much as they always were accustomed to exaggerate the English losses in a pitched battle. He was very ill; but he never wasted an opportunity; and, during the hours when the doctors would not allow him to work, he lay quiet, and thought the American question out.<sup>8</sup> The illustrious invalid, on his sick-bed, understood George the Third's affairs much better than they were understood by George the Third himself when in full possession of his health; and some of the reflections which presented themselves to Frederic's mind were eminently

<sup>6</sup> Doniol; Tome II., Chapitre 6.

<sup>7</sup> It was calculated that, between the years 1778 and 1783, the war with England cost the French Treasury forty-eight million pounds sterling. It was the main cause of those financial difficulties which led immediately up to the Revolution of 1789.

<sup>8</sup> Le roi Frédéric au Comte de Maltzan, Octobre 1775.

just, and far from ill-natured or ignoble. He had known and admired England at a period when she was true to her better self, and while she still obeyed the guidance of her best man. She had been the only ally who, in the old hero's immense and varied experience, had ever given him more help than trouble; and Lord Chatham was the one human being on earth whom, in his heart, he acknowledged as his peer. Frederic would gladly have seen our nation intelligently and strongly governed; taking an active part in European politics; and remaining faithful, at home and abroad, to those principles of liberty which, (however little he might desire to see them introduced into his own kingdom,) he regarded as the main source of England's strength, and as the common heritage of her sons in every quarter of the globe. He thought it "very hard," (such were his exact words,) that Parliament should have proclaimed the colonists as rebels for defending their privileges against the encroachments of the central government. "Every Englishman," he said, "who is a friend to his own country, must deplore the turn that affairs are taking, and the odious perspective of discord and calamity which has opened in the history of his race."

That sentiment was finely expressed, and honourable to Frederic's head and heart; but his hostility to the Court of St. James's was inflamed by prejudices and resentments less worthy of so great a ruler. In his personal dislikes he was only too little of a hypocrite; and his opinion of contemporary monarchs, and their favourites of both sexes, had always been the one and only State secret which he was incapable of keeping unrevealed. Everything in Prussia was strictly governed except his own tongue and pen; and he would have avoided many serious difficulties if to the military genius of a Gustavus Adolphus, and the administrative faculty of a Peter the Great, he had added the characteristic attribute of William the Silent. There were two men, and one woman, by whom Frederic esteemed himself to have been deeply injured, and whom he never even pretended to forgive. The woman, who was Madame de Pompadour, had by this time died; but the other objects of his wrath were still within the reach of his ill offices, and the range of his satire. It had been a bad moment for the King of Prussia when, at the crisis of the Seven Years' War, the military and financial assistance extended to him by George the Second, and William Pitt, was unexpectedly withdrawn by George the Second's successor, and his new Scotch Prime Minister. Half a generation had elapsed since that distressing event occurred; but Frederic even yet could never mention George the Third and Lord Bute with patience,

and very seldom with decency. A scalded cat, (he would say,) dreaded even the cold water; and he, for his part, was incapable of being friends with a prince who had treated him with such signal duplicity. On one occasion, indeed, he went so far as to tell his ambassador in London that he would as soon be an ally of King George as a good Christian would be on terms with the Devil; and he was fond of declaring that Lord Bute would certainly be hanged for throwing away the American colonies, and that he himself would be only too delighted to provide the rope.<sup>9</sup>

Although Frederic the Great seldom denied himself the indulgence of giving free play to his malicious humour, he had not become the most famous, and the most successful, of European potentates by basing his foreign policy on his private antipathies and predilections. He hated King George, and he despised King George's ministers; but, during every successive phase of the American dispute, his course was exclusively determined by the conception which he had formed of Prussian interests, and by no other consideration of any sort or kind whatsoever. He had long ago been satiated with campaigns and battles. In his ambitious youth, before he had been a twelvemonth on the throne, he had cut out for himself a task which lasted him his life-time; and now, at the age of sixty-three, he had no mind to re-commence his Herculean toils, and expose his people, whom he sincerely loved, to the sacrifices of war and the miseries of invasion. But for some while past he had foreseen, with stern reluctance, the approach of a political contingency which would force him once again to draw the sword. The Elector of Bavaria, who was in precarious health, might die at any moment, leaving behind him no issue, and a disputed succession. His Duchy was claimed by the Emperor of Germany, on the most flimsy and antiquated of pretexts; and Joseph the Second made no secret of his intention to march across the Inn river, and take forcible possession of Munich, and the adjacent district, as soon as the breath was out of the Elector's body. So great an increase of territory would render the House of Austria nothing less than despotic within the boundaries of the Empire; and Frederic was firmly resolved to stand forward in the character of the champion of German independence.

As Generalissimo of the levies of the Confederacy, with his own splendid army to set them an example of valour and discipline, the King of Prussia was a match for any force which Austria herself could place in the field; but it would be a far more serious business if the

<sup>9</sup> Le roi Frédéric au Comte de Maltzan, 3 Janvier 1774; 9 Janvier 1775; 10 Octobre 1776; 7 Avril 1777.



Emperor Joseph could persuade Marie Antoinette to cajole her husband into embarking upon an offensive, and defensive, alliance with the Court of Vienna. The young Queen of France was deeply attached to her brother, and followed his advice on all points where she recognised his title to interfere with her opinions and her conduct. If it was a question of enriching a favourite, or of spending too much money on her milliner and her landscape-gardener, she was in the habit of treating his admonitions with silent neglect; but she obeyed him loyally and eagerly with regard to any matter that excited the ambition, and promoted the aggrandisement, of the family from which she sprang. The instinct of the Parisians had already condemned her, not unjustly, as a good Austrian and a very indifferent Frenchwoman; and the knowledge that she was devoted to the interests of his own life-long adversary gave deep concern, and unsleeping anxiety, to the ruler of Prussia. That doughty soldier was nervously alive to the danger of female influence in high places. When Turgot fell, and when the authority of the first administrator of his generation withered before the breath of a woman's displeasure, Frederic expressed his dread lest France should thenceforward "pass under a Government of the distaff;"<sup>10</sup> and the veteran warrior had cruel reason to regard the distaff as the most formidable of weapons. What with two empresses, and a King's mistress,—three women, (so he used to say,) hanging at his throat for seven years together,—he had come so near to being throttled that he had no inclination to repeat the horrible experience. He held it as a matter of life and death that, for several years to come, the attention of France should be diverted from Prussia, and that her energies and resources should be consumed in another, and a distant, quarter. If the Cabinets of Versailles and London could be embroiled over the question of America, Louis the Sixteenth would have no men or money to spare; and Joseph the Second would be reduced to fight single-handed in the German war which now was imminent. The King of France might be the most uxorious of husbands; but no sane or rational French statesmen would aspire to have Frederic the Great for an enemy on land at a time when they were contending at sea against the power of England.

The King of Prussia, who was no vulgar soldier, knew that a long period of stable peace was a prime necessity for France, exhausted, as she was, by a series of calamitous wars; and he had sincerely applauded Turgot as a wise and merciful man, who made it his object to relieve a wretched peasantry from the fiscal burdens under which they

<sup>10</sup> Le roi Frédéric à M. de Goltz; Potsdam, 25 Avril 1776.

groaned.<sup>11</sup> But Frederic was not in a position to afford himself the luxury of yielding to an impulse of philanthropy. During five-and-thirty years of peril and difficulty he had lived in single-minded obedience to the law of self-preservation; and, when he arrived at the conclusion that a quarrel between France and England would conduce to the security of his own kingdom, he put aside all thoughts of compassion for the French tax-payer. From the beginning of 1778 onwards he employed his immense cleverness, and his unequalled authority, to impress upon Louis the Sixteenth's ministers a conviction that the revolt of the American colonies was an opportunity for reducing the power of Great Britain which had never occurred before, and could not be expected to present itself again in the course of three generations.<sup>12</sup> That was the text upon which his ambassador at Versailles was ceaselessly exhorted to ring the changes. The poor man could never preach often enough, or loud enough, to satisfy his exacting master. Every week,—and, as the plot thickened, every third day,—brought from Potsdam a hotly worded reminder that King Louis, and his advisers, were letting the favourable moment slip. The pusillanimity of the Cabinet at Versailles, (so Frederic declared,) would be an eternal monument of weakness and indecision, and would prove that French public men lacked either the nerve, or the ambition, to revive the commanding part which their Court had formerly played on the theatre of Europe. When the unhappy Prussian envoy sought to excuse himself from acting as the mouthpiece for a diplomatic message couched in such very unflattering terms, he was told that his explanation was a parcel of verbiage, not worth the travelling expenses of a courier. Instead of pestering his Sovereign with page after page of diffuse and senseless rubbish,—the sort of stuff that a parrot might write if it could use a pen,—let him go straight off to the Comte de Vergennes, and say that the King of Prussia, after reading the last news from America, was willing to stake his military reputation on a prediction that, unless France speedily interfered, the colonists would be beaten; and that England, as soon as the rebellion was crushed, without troubling herself to issue a formal declaration of war, would descend in overpowering force upon the French garrisons in the West Indies.<sup>13</sup>

Frederic's neighbourly interest in their national affairs was accepted

<sup>11</sup> Le roi Frédéric à M. de Goltz, 1 Juillet 1776; à Monsieur d'Alembert, Octobre 1774.

<sup>12</sup> These words are taken from a letter written by Frederic in September 1777.

<sup>13</sup> Le roi Frédéric à M. de Goltz, Berlin, 31 Decembre 1776; Potsdam, 16 Octobre, 30 Octobre, 13 Novembre, 17 Novembre, 27 Novembre 1777. Doniol; Tome I., Annexes du Chapitre 17.

by the French as a compliment. They set a high value on the advice voluntarily and gratuitously offered them by so consummate a master of war and foreign policy; although they could not but perceive that he consistently abstained from enforcing his precepts by the smallest particle of practice. An old German Baron in Philadelphia had been accustomed to amuse his young Whig friends by assuring them, in quaint English, that the King of Prussia was "a great man for Liberty;"<sup>14</sup> but never was sentiment more strictly platonic than Frederic's affection for the cause of American freedom. He maintained a passive attitude throughout the war; he civilly, but very plainly, forbade Congress to use his port of Emden as a base for their naval operations; and it was not until the rebellion had finally triumphed, and the world was once more at peace, that he followed the lead of Great Britain herself, and, long after the twelfth hour had struck, recognised the United States as an independent nation.<sup>15</sup> Frederic overflowed with excellent reasons for remaining neutral. He was always ready to explain, with ostentatious humility, how he was so poor, and so much of a landsman, as to be of no account whatever in a maritime war. England, (he said,) could raise the thirty-six million crowns, which each campaign cost her, more easily than he himself could borrow a florin. When a French philosopher inquired what part His Majesty would take in the approaching struggle on behalf of humanity, Frederic replied that, so far as he could discern the intentions of Mars and Bellona, the combatants would expend their mutual fury at sea; and that his own fleet unfortunately laboured under the disadvantage of containing neither ships, pilots, admirals, nor sailors. He was frequently urged to sanction a traffic, which could not fail to be lucrative, between the Prussian ports and the sea-board of the revolted colonies; but he answered, like a sound man of business, that the British Admiralty had eighty cruisers afloat, and that the capture of a single one of his own blockade-runners would sweep away the profits of the entire venture.<sup>16</sup>

Frederic the Great eluded the advances of the American Congress with the skill and astuteness of an old campaigner. During the year immediately succeeding the Declaration of Independence, the new Republic across the ocean was a terror and a bugbear in every Chancel-

<sup>14</sup> Graydon's *Memoirs*.

<sup>15</sup> Wharton's *Diplomatic Correspondence*; Volume I., Introduction, Chapter 6.

<sup>16</sup> Le roi Frédéric Comte de Maltzan, 13 Octobre 1777; à M. d'Alembert, 26 Octobre 1777; au Comte de Maltzan, 3 Juin 1776; à M. de Schulenburg, 16 Mai 1777.

lery on the Continent of Europe. All the multitudinous blunders in administration and in war, which were made by that audacious and energetic population of Anglo-Saxon colonists, thrown unexpectedly on their own resources, were as nothing in comparison to the crude and haphazard quality of their early attempts at diplomacy. Congress, jealous of the individual, declined to nominate a responsible Minister for Foreign Affairs; and the external relations of the United States were entrusted to a committee fluctuating in numbers and composition, with no permanent Chairman or Secretary, and no authority to initiate a policy of its own. Important matters were openly debated, and decided by vote of the whole House, after the most confidential despatches from Madrid or Versailles had been read aloud at the table; and, when Congress was not in session, the decision had to wait. The statesmen at Philadelphia conducted their diplomatic proceedings with no lack of spirit and vigour, and with a superabundance of startling originality. They began by procuring a copy of Vattel, "which was continually in the hands of members;" and, if the book taught them nothing else, they might learn from its pages that every proposal, great or small, which they pressed on the attention of foreign Courts, was in flat and flagrant contradiction to the Law of Nations. They appointed a perfect swarm of envoys and agents, and invested them with extensive powers. They fixed the salaries of their ambassadors, and left them to be paid by the novel expedient of borrowing money from the Courts to which they were accredited. They arranged a separate cipher with each of their emissaries; they instructed him in the mysteries of invisible ink; and they carefully specified the weight of shot which would be required to sink his bag of papers if ever, in the course of a voyage, the ship in which he travelled was in danger of being overhauled by a British frigate. And, above all, they laid down principles, and invented methods, which in process of time would have revolutionised the whole system of diplomacy, if they had been recommended for general imitation by success, instead of being discredited by notorious failure.<sup>17</sup>

Among the authoritative canons of diplomacy are the three settled rules that an envoy should not be pressed upon a foreign Court which is unwilling to receive one; that, when proposals of an exceptional and momentous character are submitted to a foreign government, the case

<sup>17</sup> Wharton's *Introduction*, Chapters 1 and 9. Franklin to Dumas; Philadelphia, December 19, 1775. Arthur Lee to the Committee of Secret Correspondence; June 3, 1776. Committee of Secret Correspondence to Captain Hammond; Baltimore, Jan. 2, 1777.



should be put forward with circumspection, and the ground carefully prepared beforehand; and that, where a nation is unable to command the services of professional diplomatists, its ambassadors should be men who have the given proof of ability and discretion in other, and kindred, departments of State business. Benjamin Franklin, the only American who had had experience in dealing with European Cabinets, urged these considerations upon his brother-members; but the Lees and the Adamses, and those with whom they habitually acted, were enamored of a theory which not even Franklin could induce them to abandon. The same political party within the walls of Congress, which believed in amateur generals, and advocated a headlong strategy in war, pinned its faith on amateur ambassadors, and maintained that all negotiations with external governments should be conducted in a blunt and uncereemonious style. "Militia diplomatists," (said John Adams,) "sometimes gain victories over regular troops, even by departing from the rules."<sup>18</sup> That was the doctrine of the hour; and the politicians who then guided the counsel of America acted up to it without qualification, and without reserve. They extemporised a diplomatic service by the easy process of nominating any American Whig who happened to be in Europe when the Revolution broke out, and who had a mind for public employment. None of these ready-made ambassadors possessed any aptitude for their new vocation; their antecedents had often been dubious; and their subsequent history, in some cases, was nothing better than deplorable. Always without invitation, and for the most part in the teeth of strenuous remonstrances, they were despatched to the capital of every leading European country, or at all events as far across the frontier as they were allowed to penetrate. The acceptability of the individual envoy has always been accounted a prime factor in the success of his mission; but anything less resembling a *persona grata* cannot be pictured than an ex-barrister or commission agent,—with the gift of the tongue, but not of tongues,—forcing his way into a royal antechamber as the representative of a Republic which had never been officially recognised; begging in voluble and idiomatic English for a large loan of public money; and exhorting the Ministers of the Court,

<sup>18</sup> John Adams to Robert R. Livingston; Feb. 21, 1782. Adams said, in the same letter, that a man might be unacceptable at the Court to which he was sent, and yet successfully accomplish the object of his mission. That would be true of those who, like Adams himself, and the younger Laurens, brought to the unaccustomed work of diplomacy an exalted character, and a strong intellect; but the typical American emissary, in the earlier period of the Revolution, was endowed with neither the one nor the other.

within whose precincts he had trespassed, to embark upon a course of treacherous hostility against a powerful monarch with whom they were living on terms of apparent amity.

Spain, of all the great European powers, required the most cautious and delicate handling. Her wars with England had left her embittered and vindictive, perilously weak and terribly poor. The British garrison at Gibraltar was a thorn in her side which she would risk a very serious operation to extract; but she discriminated between the various expedients that presented themselves for retaliating upon her ancient enemy. She was prepared to encourage disaffection, and to subsidise rebellion, among the Catholics of Ireland;<sup>19</sup> but she watched the revolt of the British colonies in America with small sympathy, and grave uneasiness on her own account. The population of the Spanish dependencies on the further side of the Atlantic far exceeded that of the mother-country. They were bound to Spain by no sentiment of patriotism, no affection for the reigning family, and no community of political rights and privileges. The union between the component parts of the empire depended exclusively on material force; and the material force of the Spanish Government had been reduced very low indeed.<sup>20</sup> Louis the Sixteenth's ministers were insistent in their proposal that both branches of the House of Bourbon should join in the crusade against England. But Charles the Third, and his able and honest Chief of the Cabinet, the Count Florida Blanca, listened to the suggestion with distrust and misgiving; and when, after long hesitation, and many qualms of conscience, they at length yielded to French importunity, they never ceased to suspect, in their inmost hearts, that their alliance with the American republic was a suicidal policy. Spanish Legitimists of pure blood believe, to this very hour, that all the subsequent misfortunes of their cause, and country, are due to the madness of the old Spanish Court in assisting the rebels of New England and Virginia against their lawful Sovereign.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Letter of the Marquis de Grimaldi from Madrid to the Spanish Ambassador at Paris; 26 February 1777. Doniol; Tome I., Page 335.

<sup>20</sup> Bancroft's *History of the common action of France and America in the War of Independence*; Chapter I.

<sup>21</sup> "The disregard of the Legitimist principle by France and Spain, between 1776 and 1782, led to the French Revolution, the invasion of Spain by the French, and to revolutions in all the Spanish possessions on the American Continent. The rebellions in Cuba, and the Philippines, are the last direct consequences of the help which Charles the Third gave the Americans in their War of Independence." These sentences are taken from an Address, presented to Don Carlos by some of his leading adherents during the recent conflict between the United States and Spain.

The Lees of Westmoreland County in Virginia, when the Revolution began, might plausibly be described by their admirers as the governing family of America.<sup>22</sup> Two of them were Signers; and one, the celebrated Richard Henry Lee, was an orator of great influence, and remarkable charm. Another pair of the brethren sought their fortune in England,—William as a merchant, and Arthur at the Bar. They plunged deep into the municipal politics of London, at a time when the London Corporation was a living and powerful force in the politics of the empire. William Lee, in 1775, was elected an alderman on the Wilkes ticket, after a heated contest in which his brother Arthur astonished the Liverymen by a display of that eloquence which was native in his family. Arthur Lee had considerable talent; and he might have played a fine part in the American Revolution if his self-esteem had not been in vast excess of his public spirit. His constitutional inability to see anything in his colleagues and comrades except their least pleasing and admirable qualities, and his readiness to imagine evil in them where none existed, marred his own usefulness as a servant of the people, and led him, in more than one instance, to inflict cruel and irreparable injury upon others. Such was the man who, in the spring of 1777, set off on the road to Madrid as the show ambassador of the United States. He heralded his approach by a memorial to the Court of Spain describing the American Republic as an infant Hercules who had strangled serpents in the cradle; and declaring, (with a change of metaphor inside the space of three sentences,) that the hour had come to clip the wings of Britain, and pinion her for ever. The Spanish ministers replied, quietly and curtly, that Lee, in his eagerness to serve his own country, had not considered the difficulties and obligations of those whom he was addressing. His progress southward was stopped short at Burgos by order of the Court; and, like other people who have not been wanted in Spain, he was gradually compelled to retreat beyond the Ebro to Vittoria, and thence expelled in rout and confusion back across the Pyrenees.

Arthur Lee did not stand alone in the frustration of his hopes, and the collapse of his enterprise. His brother William, who had been

<sup>22</sup> "That band of brothers, intrepid and unchangeable, who, like the Greeks at Thermopylae, stood in the gap, in defence of their country, from the first glimmering of the Revolution in the horizon, through all its rising light, to the perfect day." This picture of the Lee family was drawn by John Adams, at the age of eighty-three. He put no shade into his group of portraits, although there was enough, and to spare, of it in one of the sitters. But it would be unjust to deny that all the Lees were sincere partisans of the Revolution.

appointed by Congress to be their national representative in Austria, was duly admonished that his presence would be unacceptable to the Emperor Joseph; and he was careful not to show himself within a hundred leagues of Vienna. Ralph Izard of South Carolina had for some years resided in Europe as "a gentleman of fortune." He was named American Minister at Florence; but he never passed the Alps; for the Grand Duke of Tuscany let him know by post that his credentials would not be recognised. The most disagreeably situated among all the batch of envoys was Francis Dana of Massachusetts, who had been told off to Russia, and who walked fearlessly into the she-bear's den. Catherine had no use for him. As a politic Sovereign she shrank from giving unnecessary offence to England; and a demure Bostonian was not the sort of foreign visitor whom, as a woman, she cared to have about her. Her ministers informed Dana that he must not so much as petition to be received at Court. He lived in mortifying isolation. Official society closed its doors against him; and his existence was studiously ignored by the English, who were the only people in St. Petersburg with whom he could exchange an intelligible sentence.<sup>23</sup> Rebuffed in every quarter of Europe, like so many commercial travellers forbidden to display their wares, the baffled diplomatists fell back upon Paris, where they led an aimless and restless existence;—interfering in the negotiations conducted by the American Legation at the Court of France; squabbling over their share in the fund available for the payment of their salaries; and sending monthly reports to Congress which, as often as not, failed to arrive at their destination. For the risks of communication by sea were so great that American state secrets were no secrets for the English Cabinet. The Republic had as many as twelve paid agents on the Continent of Europe, all of whom wrote home on every opportunity; and yet there was once a period of eleven months during which not a single line from any one of them reached Philadelphia.<sup>24</sup> It was calculated that more than half the letters written by, and to, the American envoys in Europe were captured on deep water by British cruisers; and King George's servants in Downing

<sup>23</sup> Wharton's *Introduction*; Chapter 14. Dana used to write in English to Verac, the French Ambassador at St. Petersburg; and Verac got his letters translated, and then answered in French. "It is very doubtful, Sir," (so Verac warned Dana on one occasion,) "whether the Cabinet of Her Imperial Majesty will consent to recognise the Minister of a Power which has not as yet, in their eyes, a political existence, and expose themselves to the complaints which the Court of London will not fail to make. . . . I ought to inform you that the Count Panin, and the Count d'Ostermann, do not understand English. This will render your communication with the ministers difficult."

<sup>24</sup> Wharton's *Introduction*; Pages 461-466.



Street were kept informed of the plans and intentions of Congress as promptly, as regularly, and as circumstantially as the Ministers of Congress abroad.

Arthur Lee, very soon after his return from Spain, started from Paris with the intention of presenting himself to Frederic the Great in the capacity of Minister for the United States at the Prussian Court. He was accompanied by a Secretary of Legation in the person of Stephen Sayre, an American born, who had been a Sheriff of London, and who had dipped deep in the politics of that city, where he more than once was in hot, and rather dirty, water. Lee, on his arrival at Berlin, was met by an official notification which, as far as he could puzzle out the language employed to convey it, indicated to him that his visit was an unexpected and unappreciated honour, but that he might remain in the city as a private individual, without assuming a diplomatic character.<sup>25</sup> He employed himself in drawing up a memorial which contained a great deal of advice about Frederic's own business, enforced in a style curiously unsuited to that monarch's literary taste.<sup>26</sup> Lee, in what the King must have regarded as a tone of grandiose impertinence, lectured his Majesty on the advantages which he would reap by allowing American privateers to sell their prizes in Prussian harbours, and by supplying the American troops with arms and ammunition. Attacking his hero on what was supposed to be his weak side, Lee suggested to the Prussian ministers that, for every musket which their royal master exported to New England at a cost to himself of less than five dollars, he might carry back as much Virginian tobacco as would sell for forty dollars in Europe.<sup>27</sup> Frederic was deaf to these blandishments; and the American strangers, for want of more profitable occupation, passed much of their time in watching the soldiers of the most famous army in Europe go through their exercise. The letter, in which Arthur Lee communicated to General Washington his observations on the Potsdam discipline, suggests a suspicion

<sup>25</sup> Baron de Schulenburg to Arthur Lee; Berlin, May 20, and June 9, 1777. "I have received," (the Baron wrote,) "the letter which you did me the honour of writing to me yesterday; and I imagine, from its conclusion, that, on account of the difference of language, you did not, perhaps, take in the true sense some of the expressions which I used in our conversation."

<sup>26</sup> Lee confidently assured Frederic that he need not be afraid of England. "You have," he wrote, "no vessels of war to cause your flag to be respected. But, Sire, you have the best regiments in the world; and Great Britain, destitute as she is of wise counsels, is not so foolish as to incur the risk of compelling your Majesty to join your valuable forces to those of her rival."

<sup>27</sup> A. Lee to Schulenburg; June 7, 1777.

that some Prussian subaltern, with a turn for mystification, must have attended him as his military cicerone. He reported that King Frederic's infantry, instead of taking aim, were taught to slant the barrel downwards so that the bullet would strike the ground ten yards in front of them. "This depression," wrote Lee, "is found necessary to counteract the elevation which the act of firing gives to the musket."<sup>28</sup> That was a lesson in practical marksmanship which the American Commander-in-Chief was at liberty to impart, for all that it was worth, to Colonel Morgan and his Virginian riflemen.

The King of Prussia, at that moment, would willingly have dispensed with the presence at Berlin of any diplomatic representative of the English-speaking race. There had been times when the ambassador of Great Britain stood high in the favour of Frederic the Great. Sir Andrew Mitchell was his comrade of the camp, and the partner of his interior counsels, throughout the worst hardships and anxieties of the Seven Years' War; and he had been on excellent terms with Mitchell's successor,—that same James Harris who afterwards made a considerable figure as the first Earl of Malmesbury. Harris had very recently been promoted to St. Petersburg, and had been followed at Berlin by Hugh Elliot, a cadet of the house of Minto. Elliot possessed much of the family cleverness, and already was versed in the lighter aspects of several European Courts. He had served with spirit against the Turks, as a volunteer in the Russian army; but as yet he was only five-and-twenty, and no wiser than people of the same age who are not ambassadors. Frederic viewed the appointment as a personal slight upon himself, and told the Comte de Maltzan, his diplomatic representative in London, that he had half a mind to recall him, and replace him at the Court of St. James's by a captain of infantry. That was the way, (he said,) to repay the English government with like for like.<sup>29</sup>

While the king was in this humour he was informed that the servants of the British Embassy had broken into Arthur Lee's lodging, and purloined his box of secret papers, the contents of which had been copied out by a large staff of writers, and despatched to England. Frederic, who had been through graver troubles, did not lose his self-possession over an incident which had a redeeming feature in the eyes

<sup>28</sup> A. Lee to Washington; Berlin, June 15, 1777.

<sup>29</sup> Le roi Frédéric au Comte de Maltzan, Potsdam, 10 Octobre 1776; 27 Janvier, 24 Fevrier, 1779.

of the old cynic, inasmuch as it provided him with a fertile, and congenial, theme for banter and irony. "Oh, the worthy disciple," (he cried,) "of Lord Bute! What an incomparable personage is your God-dam Elliot."<sup>30</sup> The English ought to blush for sending such ministers abroad." He vented his wrath, during the course of the next fortnight, in phrases of droll vehemence; but he was not disposed to bear hard upon a young man of promise who attempted no defence, and who appealed in becoming terms to the royal clemency. Elliot accepted the whole responsibility; declared,—truly or diplomatically, as the case might be,—that the British government had no share in a transaction which he acknowledged to be unjustifiable; and submitted himself humbly to the judgment of the King of Prussia. Regret was duly expressed by George the Third's Cabinet; and the Secretary of State rebuked Mr. Elliot for the impropriety of his conduct, and warned him that nothing except the generous behaviour of His Prussian Majesty had on this occasion prevented the necessity of removing him from his post.<sup>31</sup> Frederic's anger and annoyance, in point of fact, were directed rather against the victim, than the contriver, of the outrage. The King was only too well aware that the notice, which he had been obliged to take, of an international scandal arising within the circuit of his own capital, would be construed by the world at large as an indirect recognition of the American Republic. His hand had been forced,—a sensation which a strong man never relishes; and the effects of his disgust and resentment were soon apparent. Arthur Lee's mission came to an abrupt termination. His papers had been abstracted on the twenty-fifth of June; and before the last day of July he was back again in Paris. Four months afterward he intimated to the Prussian government that his brother William was appointed to succeed him at

<sup>30</sup> Le roi Frédéric au Comte de Maltzan; Potsdam, 30 Juin 1777. Frederic did not easily tire of an old, or even a very old, jest; and, now that our countrymen had lost his good graces, he often applied to them that nickname by which, three centuries and a half before, they were known on the continent of Europe among people who did not love them. "If," said Joan of Arc, "there were a hundred thousand more Goddams in France than there are to-day, they should not have this kingdom."

<sup>31</sup> The tone of this communication from the English Foreign Office, and the substance of that which followed, indicate that Lord Suffolk had known a great deal more about the seizure of Lee's papers than he now chose to admit. "A little later, another despatch informs Mr. Elliot that the King of England had entirely overlooked the exceptional circumstances of the business, in consideration of the loyal zeal which occasioned them; and the despatch closes by the announcement that the expenses, incurred by Mr. Elliot, would be indemnified by the Crown." *Memoir of the Right Honourable Hugh Elliot*, by the Countess of Minto; Chapter 3.

Berlin; but Frederic had had enough of the Lees, and replied by a brief and peremptory refusal.<sup>32</sup> No sane man, in the face of such a prohibition, would venture to thrust himself into the territory of a monarch who had spent the seven best years of his life in proving that he could make himself supremely unpleasant to an invader.

The early relations between the United States of America, and the monarchies of Europe, may be studied with advantage by those writers who attach little or no importance to the personal factor in history. The prospects of the young Republic were seriously, and to all appearance irretrievably, damnified by the mismanagement of Congress; but the position was saved by the ability, the discretion, and the force of character of one single man. Benjamin Franklin was now past seventy. He had begun to earn his bread as a child of ten; he commenced as an author at sixteen; and he had ever since been working with his hands, and taxing his brain, unintermittently, and to the top of his power. Such exertions were not maintained with impunity. He kept his strength of will unimpaired, his mind clear and lively, and his temper equable, by a life-long habit of rigid abstemiousness; but he already felt the approach of painful diseases that tortured him cruelly before the immense undertaking, which still lay before him, had been half accomplished. In September 1776 he was elected Commissioner to France, by a unanimous Resolution of Congress, Franklin, in the highest sense of the term, was a professional diplomatist; for he had passed sixteen years in England as Agent for his colony; and his individual qualities had gained for him a political influence, and a social standing, out of all proportion to the comparatively humble interests which he represented at the British Court. The ambassadors of the Great Powers, who were resident in London, treated him as one of themselves. He was old enough to be the father of most among them, and wise enough to be the adviser of all; and, towards the end of his time, they united in regarding him as in some sort of the *doyen* of their body. Franklin's knowledge of European statesmen, and courtiers, taught him to anticipate nothing but failure and humiliation from the diplomatic methods which Congress favoured; and he had no confidence whatever in the emissaries whom it thought fit to employ. The acceptance of the laborious and perilous mission, to which he was now invited, presented itself to his mind in the light of an absolute duty.

<sup>32</sup> Baron de Schulenburg to A. Lee; Berlin, November 28, 1777.



His feelings remain on record in a letter which he subsequently addressed to a friend who urged him, in those "tempestuous times," to take some care of himself, and of his own safety. "I thank you," he wrote, "for your kind caution; but, having nearly finished a long life, I set but little value on what remains of it. Like a draper, when one chaffers with him for a remnant, I am ready to say: 'As it is only the fag end, I will not differ with you about it. Take it for what you please.'" <sup>33</sup>

We are told that "before Franklin left for France he placed in the hands of Congress, then in dire necessity for want of money, all his available funds, knowing that, if the cause failed, his loan failed with it." <sup>34</sup> It was a paltry sum according to American standards of to-day; for the capital accumulated by the most famous inventor, and the most indefatigable municipal administrator, of his generation, amounted to just three thousand pounds: and, when the country grew poorer still, and it became doubtful whether Franklin would ever again see the colour of his money, he acquiesced in his probable loss with the resignation of a disinterested patriot. <sup>35</sup> He, and two of his grandsons, embarked in a sloop of war of sixteen guns, carrying a consignment of indigo which was to be sold in France for the purpose of defraying the initial expenses of the American Legation. The captain was charged by the Committee of Marine to make the Doctor's voyage pleasant, and to take his orders about speaking to any vessel which might be encountered on the way. <sup>36</sup> The weather was rough, and Franklin suffered much from an old man's ailment, aggravated by the tossing of the waves; but he never was fretful, and never at a loss for occupation and diversion. He confirmed, or corrected, his former observations on the temperature of the Gulf-stream; he experienced the emotion of being chased by a British war-ship; and, after a swift run of thirty days, he sailed into Quiberon Bay, accompanied, to the wonder and amusement of Europe, by two prizes laden with a large and varied assortment of goods, the value of which he doubtless could calculate more accu-

<sup>33</sup> Franklin to David Hartley; April, 1778.

<sup>34</sup> Wharton's *Introduction*; Chapter 10.

<sup>35</sup> Twelve years afterwards Franklin took stock of his investment. "I have received," he wrote, "no interest for several years; and, if I were now to sell the principal, I should not get more than a sixth part. You must not ascribe this to want of honesty in our government, but to want of ability; the war having exhausted all the faculties of the country."

<sup>36</sup> *American Archives* for October 1776.

rately and quickly than any other man on board.<sup>37</sup> When he had recovered sufficient health he travelled to Paris, where he was awaited by Silas Deane and Arthur Lee, whom Congress had associated with him on the Commission. Before the end of the year the three Americans had an interview with the Comte de Vergennes, and placed in his hands a very brief and closely argued letter, which bore in every sentence the marks of condensation and excision by Franklin's pen. The Commissioners offered France and Spain the friendship and alliance of the United States; they made a promise, (which, as the event showed, was not theirs to give,) that a vigorously conducted war would expel the British from their settlements in the West Indies; they asked for thirty thousand firelocks and bayonets; and they proposed to hire from King Louis eight ships of the line, grounding their request on the analogy of the battalions which the Duke of Brunswick, and the Landgrave of Hesse, had placed at the disposal of England.<sup>38</sup> The French government returned a very civil, but guarded, answer; by word of mouth, and not on paper, in order that the envoys of Congress might have no compromising document to exhibit, or to mislay and lose. But the mere circumstance that proposals so audacious and unusual had not been summarily rejected by a Cabinet of responsible French ministers was a point gained for America, and a long step by France on the downward road which led straight to an English war.

The Marquis de Noailles, who then was French Minister at the Court of St. James's, had been instructed to assure the English Cabinet that Franklin's presence in Europe was a matter of no political significance whatsoever. Acting upon the maxim that a man is best able to deceive others when he is deceived himself, King Louis's Foreign Secretary was at the pains to compose an artful, and most insincere, despatch with the express intention of hoodwinking and misleading King Louis's ambassador. Vergennes informed Noailles that Doctor Franklin conducted himself modestly in Parisian society, where he had renewed acquaintance with some old friends, and was surrounded by a host of the curious. His conversation, which betokened the man of talent and intelligence, was in a quiet and subdued tone; and his whole course

<sup>37</sup> Walpole to the Countess of Ossory; Dec. 17, 1776. Beaumarchais to Vergennes; 16 December, 1776. "The noise," wrote Beaumarchais, "made by the arrival of Franklin is inconceivable. This brave old man allowed his vessel to make two prizes on the way, in spite of the personal risk he thereby incurred. And we French permit ourselves to be afraid!"

<sup>38</sup> Doniol; Tome I., Chapitre 8.

of life was transparently candid and guileless.<sup>39</sup> There was something exquisitely absurd in this fancy portrait of Benjamin Franklin as a philosopher travelling in search of scientific facts, and actuated by a mild and amiable interest in the manners and customs of the foreign country where he chanced to find himself. Lord Stormont, the English ambassador in France, took occasion to warn the French government that the Doctor, simple as he seemed, had got the better of three successive English Foreign Ministers; and that he never was so formidable, and never so little to be trusted, as when he appeared to have no room in his mind for affairs of State.

Lord Stormont was right. Franklin had come to Europe for the sole purpose of engaging in a stern and single-handed conflict with the difficulties and problems of a supreme crisis; and the old man's tale of work during the next eight years was a record which has seldom been beaten. Europe, (it has been truly said,) was henceforward the centre of action, where the funds for carrying on the Rebellion were raised, and the supplies required by the American armies were mainly purchased. In Europe, moreover, as a consequence of the impossibility of prompt and regular communication across the seas with Congress, the diplomacy of the Republic was necessarily moulded. American privateers were fitted out, their crews enlisted, and their prizes sold, in European ports; and all controverted questions about the legal validity of their captures were examined and decided in Europe, and not in America. "It was by Franklin alone that these various functions were exercised. It was on Franklin alone that fell the enormous labour of keeping the accounts connected with these various departments."<sup>40</sup> He had no staff of clerks at his command, and no deft and devoted subordinates to collect information, to sift correspondence, to prepare despatches for signature, and to save their over-burdened chief from the infliction of a personal interview with all the idlers, and jobbers, and soldiers of fortune, and real or sham men of science, who daily thronged his door. His only assistant was his elder grandson,—a worthy youth who could write from dictation, and copy a letter in good round hand; but who did not possess, and never acquired, the art of drafting an important paper.

<sup>39</sup> Le Comte de Vergennes au Marquis de Noailles; 10 Janvier, 1777.

<sup>40</sup> Wharton, in the tenth chapter of his *Introduction*, gives an exhaustive account of Franklin's work in France. His functions, (Wharton writes,) "were of the same general character as those which in England are exercised by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, the Admiralty Board, the War Secretaries, and the Courts of Admiralty."

From other Americans then resident in Paris Franklin received little help, and a great deal of most unnecessary hindrance. Silas Deane, who had business knowledge and business aptitudes, was of service in arranging contracts, and inspecting warlike stores; and Deane, after Franklin's arrival in Europe, had the good sense to confine himself strictly within his own province. But Arthur Lee was an uneasy, and a most dangerous, yoke-fellow. Lee was a sinister personage in the drama of the American Revolution;—the assassin of other men's reputations and careers, and the suicide of his own. He now was bent on defaming and destroying Silas Deane, whom he fiercely hated, and on persuading the government at home to transfer Franklin to Vienna, so that he himself might remain behind in France as the single representative of America at the Court of Versailles. The group of politicians in Philadelphia, who were caballing against George Washington, maintained confidential, and not every creditable, relations with Arthur Lee at Paris. His eloquent brother was his mouthpiece in Congress; and he plied Samuel Adams with a series of venomous libels upon Franklin, which were preserved unrebuked, and too evidently had been read with pleasure. The best that can be said for Arthur Lee is that, in his personal dealings with the colleagues whom he was seeking to ruin, he made no pretence of a friendship which he did not feel; and his attitude towards his brother envoys was, to the last degree, hostile and insulting. He found an ally in Ralph Izard, who lived at Paris, an ambassador *in partibus*, two hundred leagues away from the capital to which he was accredited; drawing the same salary as Franklin; denouncing him in open letters addressed to the President of Congress; and insisting, with querulous impertinence, on his right to participate in all the secret counsels of the French Court. Franklin for some months maintained an unruffled composure. He had never been quick to mark offences; and he now had reached that happy period of life when a man values the good-will of his juniors, but troubles himself very little about their disapproval. He ignored the provocation given by his pair of enemies, and extended to them a hospitality which they, on their part, did not refrain from accepting, although his food and wine might well have choked them.<sup>41</sup> But the moment came when his own self-respect, and a due consideration for the public interest, forbade Franklin any longer to pass over their conduct in silence; and he spoke out in a style which astonished both of them at the time, and has gratified the American reader ever since. He castigated Arthur Lee in as plain and vigorous English as ever was set down on paper, and in-

<sup>41</sup> Wharton's *Introduction*; Chapter 12.



formed Ralph Izard, calmly but very explicitly, that he would do well to mind his own business.<sup>42</sup>

Franklin, as long as he was on European soil, had no need to stand upon ceremony when dealing with a refractory fellow-countryman; for he was in great authority on that side of the Atlantic Ocean. Europe had welcomed and accepted him, not as a mere spokesman and agent of the government at Philadelphia, but as the living and breathing embodiment of the American Republic. No statesman would do business with anybody but Franklin. No financier would negotiate a loan except with him, or pay over money into other hands but his. "It was to Franklin that both the French and English ministries turned, as if he were not only the sole representative of the United States in Europe, but as if he were endowed with plenipotentiary power."<sup>43</sup> Nine-tenths of the public letters addressed to the American Commissioners were brought to his house; "and," (so his colleagues admitted,) "they would ever be carried wherever Doctor Franklin is."<sup>44</sup> He transacted his affairs with Louis the Sixteenth's ministers on a footing of equality, and, (as time went on,) of unostentatious but unquestionable superiority. Thomas Jefferson, an impartial and most competent observer, had on one occasion been contending that American diplomatists were always spoiled for use after they had been kept seven years abroad. But this, (said Jefferson,) did not apply to Franklin, "who was America itself when in France, not subjecting himself to French influence," but imposing American influence upon France, and upon the whole course and conduct of her national policy.

The fact was that the French ministry, in its relations to Franklin, had to reckon with a political phenomenon of exceptional nature, and portentous significance. The royal authority in France was uncontrolled by any effective, and continuously operating, machinery of national self-government; but that very circumstance lent force and weight to public opinion, at those rare conjunctures when public opinion had been strongly moved. If ever the privileged, the moneyed, and the intellec-

<sup>42</sup> "It is true that I have omitted answering some of your letters, particularly your angry ones, in which you, with very magisterial airs, schooled and documented as if I had been one of your domestics. I saw, in the strongest light, the importance of our living in decent civility towards each other, while our great affairs were depending here. I saw your jealous, suspicious, malignant, and quarrelsome temper, which was daily manifesting itself against Mr. Deane, and almost every other person you had any concern with. I therefore passed your affronts in silence; did not answer, but burnt, your angry letters; and received you, when I next saw you, with the same civility as if you had never wrote them." Franklin to Arthur Lee; Passy, 4 April, 1778.

<sup>43</sup> Wharton's *Introduction*; Chapter 11.

<sup>44</sup> John Adams to Jonathan Jackson; Paris, 17 November, 1782.

tual classes united in one way of thinking, their influence was all the more irresistible because it was not defined, and limited, by the provisions of a written constitution. The rest of the nation, below those classes, was a powerless and voiceless proletariat; while above them there was nothing except a handful of Viscounts and Marquises, the Royal ministers of the hour, who were drawn from their ranks, and lived in their society, and who were mortally afraid of their disapprobation, and still more of their ridicule. France, in the last resort, was ruled by fashion; and Franklin had become the idol of fashion like no foreigner, and perhaps no Frenchman, either before or since.

His immense and, (as he himself was the foremost to acknowledge,) his extravagant popularity was founded on a solid basis of admiration and esteem. The origin of his fame dated from a time which seemed fabulously distant to the existing generation. His qualities and accomplishments were genuine and unpretentious; and his services to the world were appreciated by high and low, rich and poor, in every country where men learned from books, or profited by the discoveries of science. His *Poor Richard*,—which expounded and elucidated a code of rules for the everyday conduct of life with sagacity that never failed, and wit that very seldom missed the mark,—had been thrice translated into French, had gone through many editions, and had been recommended by priests and bishops for common use in their parishes and dioceses. As an investigator, and an experimentalist, he was more widely known even than as an author; for he had always aimed at making natural philosophy the hand maid of material progress. Those homely and practical inventions, by which he had done so much to promote the comfort and convenience of the average citizen, had caused him to be regarded as a public benefactor in every civilised community throughout the world.<sup>45</sup> His reputation, (so John Adams wrote,) was

<sup>45</sup> The Franklin stoves were much used in Paris. One of the French ministers was asked whether he had as yet put them into his reception-rooms. "No," (he replied;) "for the English ambassador would not then consent to warm himself at my fire."

There was talk, among men of science, about George the Third having ordered the disuse at Kew Palace of lightning-conductors on the Franklin pattern; but the Doctor himself refused to be drawn into the controversy. "Disputes," he wrote, "are apt to sour one's temper and disturb one's quiet. I have no private interest in the reception of my inventions by the world, having never made, nor proposed to make, the least profit by any of them. The King's changing his *pointed* conductors for *blunt* ones is, therefore, a matter of small importance to me. If I had a wish about it, it would be that he rejected them altogether as ineffectual; for it is only since he thought himself, and his family, safe from the thunder of Heaven that he dared to use his own thunder in destroying his innocent subjects."

more universal than that of Leibnitz or Newton. "His name was familiar to government and people, to foreign countries,—to nobility, clergy, and philosophers, as well as to plebeians,—to such a degree that there was scarcely a peasant or a citizen, a valet, coachman, or footman, a lady's chambermaid, or scullion in the kitchen, who did not consider him a friend to humankind." If Franklin, at seventy years of age, had visited France as a private tourist, his progress through her cities would have been one long ovation; and her enthusiasm transcended all bounds when, coming as an ambassador from a new world beyond the seas, he appealed to French chivalry on behalf of a young nation struggling for freedom. "His mission," (said a French writer who was no blind partisan of Franklin,) "flattered all the bright and generous ideas which animated France. He caressed our happiest hopes, our most gilded chimæras. He came across the ocean to win liberty for his own country; and he brought liberty to us. He was the representative of a people still primitive and unsophisticated,—or who appeared so in our eyes. He professed no religious creed except tolerance, and kindness of heart. France, moved by a thousand passions and a thousand caprices, prostrated herself at the feet of a man who had no caprices and no passions. She made him the symbol and object of her adoration; and Franklin took rank above Voltaire and Rousseau, by the side of Socrates." <sup>46</sup>

One such account must serve for all. It would be tedious, and superfluous, to multiply quotations from contemporary authors who have recorded that passionate devotion, and, (what in parallel cases has been a rare feature,) the invincible constancy and fidelity with which French society abandoned itself to the worship of Franklin. The wise old American was keenly alive to the excess, and the occasional absurdity, of the adulation by which he was encompassed. He had measured, more accurately than any man then living, the true and exact worth of Benjamin Franklin; and he did nothing whatever to encourage the exaggerated estimate of that personage which most Frenchmen, and all French women, persisted in cherishing. He lived his own life, and talked his own talk, and allowed the imaginative and emotional Parisians to make what they chose both of the one and the other. The French Government, anxious to keep their distinguished guest as far as possible removed from hostile supervision and impertinent curiosity, placed at his disposal a house and garden at Passy, which now is well

<sup>46</sup> *Le Dix-huitième Siècle en Angleterre* par M. Philarète Chasles, Professeur au Collège de France; Paris, 1846.

within the circuit of the fortifications, but then was still "a neat village, on high ground, half a mile from the city."<sup>47</sup> Here Franklin dwelt, as pleasantly lodged as in an elm-shaded suburb of his own Philadelphia; superintending the education of his smaller grandson, who was a child of seven; entertaining Americans, young and old, at a quiet dinner on the Sunday afternoon; working, during odd hours, in the Royal Laboratory, which stood close at hand; and making a show of drinking the Passy waters. He was seldom seen on foot in the streets of the capital; and he took his exercise, with conscientious regularity, in his garden when the sun shone, and within doors during the months of winter. "I walk," (so he told John Adams in November 1782,) "every day in my chamber. I walk quick, and for an hour, so that I go a league. I make a point of religion of it." When he appeared in public he was dressed in good broadcloth of a sober tint; conspicuous with his long straight hair, whitened by age, and not by art; and wearing a pair of spectacles, to remedy an old man's dimness of vision, and a cap of fine marten's fur, because he had an old man's susceptibility to cold.

Franklin's costume had not been designed with any idea of pleasing the Parisians; but it obtained an extraordinary success, and has left a mark on history. Fine gentlemen, with their heads full of the new philosophy, regarded his unembroidered coat, and unpowdered locks, as a tacit, but visible, protest against those luxuries and artificialities which they all condemned, but had not the smallest intention of themselves renouncing. He reminded them of everything and everybody that Jean Jacques Rousseau had taught them to admire. The Comte de Ségur declared that "Franklin's antique and patriarchal aspect seemed to transport into the midst of an enervated, and servile, civilisation a Republican of Rome of the time of Cato and Fabius, or a sage who had consorted with Plato." Some compared him to Diogenes, and some to Phocion,—about whom they can have known very little; for, if Phocion had been a Pennsylvanian of Anno Domini 1776, he would, beyond all question, have been a strenuous and uncompromising supporter of the British connection. Readers of *Émile*, who then comprised three-fourths of the fashionable world, delighted to recognise in the

<sup>47</sup> Franklin to Mrs. Margaret Stevenson: Passy, 25 January, 1779. John Adams, on his arrival in France, was greatly exercised at finding his brother Commissioner so desirably lodged,—“at what rent,” (he said,) “I never could discover; but, from the magnificence of the place, it was universally suspected to be enormously high.” It is now well ascertained that Monsieur Ray de Chaumont, under whom Franklin sat rent-free, was acting on behalf of the Government.



American stranger an express and living image of the Savoyard Vicar; and it was believed, with some reason, that his views on religion nearly corresponded to those of Rousseau's famous ecclesiastic, although Franklin would most certainly have compressed his Profession of Faith into much shorter compass.<sup>48</sup> The great French ladies were attracted and fascinated by his quiet self-possession, his benign courtesy, and his playful, yet always rational, conversation. The ardour of Franklin's votaries sometimes manifested itself with an exuberance which made it difficult for him to keep his countenance. When he paid a visit to Madame d'Houdetot at her country residence in the Valley of Montmorency, his hostess,—attended by the solemn and inperturbable Marquis who then was her lover, as he was the lover in turn of the most celebrated blue-stockings of that generation,—came forth to meet him, as if he were a royal personage, before he entered the avenue. She greeted him with an address in verse; at dinner he was regaled by a rhymed compliment, from some Count or Viscount, between every course, and after the coffee; Monsieur d'Houdetot himself, "rising to the sublime of absurdity in his quality of husband," instituted an elaborate parallel between Franklin and William Tell, to the disadvantage of the Swiss patriot; and the departing guest was ultimately pursued to his coach-door by a shower of laudatory couplets. To exhibit himself as the central figure in such scenes was not the least among the sacrifices which Franklin made upon the altar of his country.

Franklin dined abroad on every weekday;<sup>49</sup> not because people thought it their duty to invite him, but because they never could have too much of his company. John Adams, before he himself spoke French at all, gave a disparaging account of Franklin's grammar and accent; but Frenchmen praised the ease and skill with which he employed their language; and that is the one point on which no true Parisian will ever condescend to flatter. The banquets which he attended did not

<sup>48</sup> "Ambassadors," (so a French diplomatist informed John Adams,) "have in all Courts a right to a chapel of their own way; but Mr. Franklin never had any. . . . Mr. Franklin adores only great Nature, which interested many people of both sexes in him." European society entertained exceedingly vague ideas with regard to Franklin's religious creed. Some Parisians were deeply impressed by his "Quaker humility," and Horace Walpole spoke of him as a Presbyterian. Philarète Chasles came nearer the mark, and pronounced him a Deist of the school of Locke. But Franklin was no man's disciple, and his opinions and beliefs were the home-growth of his own mind. He had been converted to Deism, at the age of twenty-one, by a sermon preached against the Deists, "whose arguments," he said, "which were quoted to be refuted, appeared to me much stronger than the refutations."

<sup>49</sup> Franklin to Mrs. Margaret Stevenson; Passy, 25 January, 1779.

afford him unmixed enjoyment; for he was almost sure of meeting some officer who wanted to become a Major General in the American army, or some chemist with an invention for blowing up the English fleet, and who only waited to begin their attack upon him until he had been "put in good humour by a glass or two of champagne." The world then dined at two in the afternoon; the party broke up as soon as the dinner had been eaten; and Franklin's evenings were very generally spent at the house of his neighbour, Madame Helvétius, who lived beyond him at Auteuil, in the direction of the Bois de Boulogne. In this lady's salon he consorted with the most prominent of his brother Academicians; for he had long ere this been elected a member of their august body. Diderot and Morellet, Lavoisier, d'Alembert, Condorcet, and Turgot were his habitual associates, and his attached friends. In Paris and at Auteuil alike, during the give and take of the best conversation which the Continent of Europe then had to show, Franklin never missed an opportunity of interesting his companions in the cause of America, and re-assuring them about her future. An undaunted and persuasive optimist, speaking with the authority of one who was no mere amateur in war, he imparted to all around him his own loyal confidence in Washington's strategy; and, at the lowest moment of his country's fortunes, he boldly and cheerfully proclaimed his settled conviction that it was not the British who had taken Philadelphia, but Philadelphia which had taken the British.<sup>50</sup> No less a writer than the Marquis de Condorcet has borne witness to the tact and ability, and the all but universal acceptance, with which Franklin handled the topic of America. "It was an honour," said Condorcet, "to have seen him. People repeated in all societies what they had heard him say. Every entertainment which he accepted, every house where he consented to go, gained him new admirers who became so many partisans of the American Revolution."

He was a great ambassador, of a type which the world had never seen before, and will never see again until it contains another Benjamin Franklin. Tried by the searching test of practical performance, he takes high rank among the diplomatists of history. His claims to that

<sup>50</sup> Six weeks after Franklin's arrival in Paris, the Prussian envoy in France sent the following account of him to King Frederic. "Le Docteur Franklin n'est pas le médecin Tant-Pis. Toutes les fois qu'on lui annonce que les Américains ont été battus, il dit: 'Tant mieux. Les Anglais seront bien attrapés.'" When people talked to him despondently about the prospects of American Independence, Franklin would reply: "Ça ira, Ça ira;" and it is said that he thus brought into fashion a phrase destined to be the watchword of the French Revolution.

position have been vindicated, in a manner worthy of the subject, by an eminent American publicist of our own generation. There were conspicuous statesmen, (writes Doctor Wharton,) at the Congress of Vienna; but the imposing fabric constructed by Metternich, and Nesselrode, and Talleyrand, with such lofty disregard for national liberties and popular rights, has long ago perished, while Franklin's work endures to this hour. It was Franklin who introduced America, on a footing of equality, into the councils of Europe, and who, in a truer sense than Canning, called the New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old. And the crown and coping-stone of his protracted labours was that final treaty of peace between Great Britain and the United States, which of all international settlements is "the one that has produced the greatest blessings to both the contracting parties, has been of the greatest benefit to civilisation as a whole, and has been the least affected by the flow of time."<sup>51</sup>

The Treaty of 1782, and the recognition by England of American Independence, were still in the distant future; but, during the early weeks of Franklin's domestication in the neighbourhood of Paris, it became evident to all concerned that the affairs of the new Republic were in firm and capable hands. Originality, unalloyed by any tincture of eccentricity, marked every private letter, and public memorandum, which issued from the library at Passy. Franklin's breadth and accuracy of knowledge, the force and acuteness of his reasoning, and the "masculine simplicity" of his style, impressed veteran French ministers with a sensation which was most unusual in their experience of official business. The relations between America, and all European countries except France, had been gravely compromised by the premature and ill-considered action of Congress; and, for some while to come, Franklin was occupied, not so much in engineering diplomatic successes, as in effacing disagreeable impressions. He began very quietly to court the favour, and invite the confidence, of all the foreign ambassadors then resident in Paris. The representatives, (we are told,) of those Sovereigns, who had not recognized the Government of the United States, were unable to extend any official civilities to the Commissioners of the Republic; but in private they sought the acquaintance of Franklin, and among them were some of his most esteemed and intimate friends.<sup>52</sup> He soon was on excellent terms with the Spanish

<sup>51</sup> Wharton's *Digest of International Law*, as quoted in the tenth Chapter of his *Introduction*.

<sup>52</sup> *Life of Doctor Franklin*, by Jared Sparks; Chapter 10.

Minister, the Comte d'Aranda; and he established a claim on the gratitude of Prince Bariatinski, the Russian ambassador, who was helped out of a very formidable scrape by the famous American's native good sense and inexhaustible good-nature. Franklin's personal popularity, during the later period of the war, was of invaluable service to his political efficiency; and the rapid growth of anti-English sentiment, all the Continent over, was due almost as much to his personal influence as to the recklessness and maladroitness of Lord North's Cabinet. The time came when Lord Shelburne told the House of Peers, with a near approach to the truth, that George the Third had but two enemies upon earth;—one, the whole world, and the other, his own Ministry.

When Franklin landed in France, Beaumarchais expressed a friendly uneasiness lest the old man, left to his own guidance "in that cursed country of meddling and gossip," should fall into bad hands, and commit some fatal blunder or indiscretion. It was sympathy wasted. The Pennsylvanian veteran had the craft of age without its feebleness; and, during the next six or seven years, the statesmen of France, and Spain, and Holland were destined to learn by unpleasant experience that, whoever was left in the lurch, it would not be Benjamin Franklin. From the very first moment of his arrival in Paris he set himself deliberately, and most artfully, at work to tempt Louis the Sixteenth's Cabinet deeper and deeper into a policy which was the salvation of America, but which in the end brought utter ruin upon the French Monarchy.

When the American Revolution broke out, and for some while afterwards, the French Government pursued a line of conduct in accord with the true interests of their own country, and consistent with the letter, if not with the spirit, of their obligations towards the Government of England. The Comte de Vergennes pronounced Lord North's attempt to subjugate the colonies by arms as "an undertaking against Nature;" injurious, in any event, to Great Britain, and replete with profit to France, if only France would remain quiet, and allow the civil war to run its course beyond the Atlantic. There was nothing, (Vergennes wrote,) which need afflict the Court of Versailles in the spectacle of England tearing herself to pieces with her own hands. It soon became evident that a golden and unexpected opportunity had arisen for the development of French commerce. Great Britain's export-trade to America had been killed outright; and her mercantile intercourse with the rest of the world was sorely hampered by the activity and audacity of the American privateers. Arthur Lee told the Com-



mittee of Foreign Affairs at Philadelphia how the Abbé Raynal, who had just returned from London, informed him that nothing disgusted the English so much as seeing their ports crowded by French ships, which were engaged in carrying on the commerce of England with other nations. "Their merchants," said Lee, "are obliged to have recourse to this expedient to screen their merchandise. They have been driven to this necessity by the number and success of your cruisers in and about the Channel."<sup>53</sup> The aspect of foreign-built vessels, taking in cargoes of home-made goods alongside the wharves of the Thames, the Mersey, and the Bristol Avon, was gall and wormwood to British ship-owners; but the British ministry favoured the continuance, and connived at the irregularities, of the traffic, because the employment of neutral merchantmen was essential for the dispersion abroad of those manufactures on which the prosperity of the kingdom already mainly depended.<sup>54</sup>

If France had been content to maintain a pacific attitude throughout the whole period of the American troubles, she would have been rewarded by an immense accession of wealth, and a secure and exalted position among the nations of the world. Those advantages, moreover, would have accrued to her automatically and inevitably, without risk or exertion on her own part, and, (which was a more important consideration still,) with no sacrifice of her public honour. But the intrigues of Beaumarchais had already committed Louis the Sixteenth and his ministers to a perilous, and worse than questionable, series of transactions; and, from this time forward, the energy and pertinacity of Franklin allowed them no rest, until they had sinned against their international duty too heinously to be forgiven by the people and the parliament of England. The influence of the great American Commissioner was apparent in every department of French administration. King Louis was timid and conscientious, and had for his Finance Minister a cautious and frugal Swiss banker; but certain members of the Cabinet, who counted for a great deal more than either His Majesty or Monsieur Necker, were always as eager to give as Franklin was

<sup>53</sup> Arthur Lee from Paris; September 9, 1777. "It is plain," wrote Washington, "that France is playing a politic game; enjoying all the advantages of our commerce without the expense of war."

<sup>54</sup> "From this invasion of the American trade by foreigners one advantage is derived, if not to the commerce and navigation, yet to the manufactures of England; for these foreign nations, not having yet got into the way of providing a proper assortment of goods for the American market, resort hither for supply. This is felt in all the manufacturing towns; and the Ministry owe much of their quiet, during the present contention, to that source." History of Europe in the *Annual Register* for 1776; Chapter 9.

bold to ask. The American Commissioners were soon accommodated with a loan of two million francs, bearing no interest, and to be repaid only "when the United States were settled in peace and prosperity." Another million came from the Farmers General, in exchange for a permission to purchase twenty thousand hogsheads of tobacco, at local prices, from the warehouses of Maryland and Virginia. Four millions, ten millions, and six millions were afterwards forthcoming in three successive years; and the total money obtained from France, at the solicitation of Franklin, amounted at last to six and twenty million francs. These great sums were thriftily, and very knowingly, expended on the purchase of military stores for Washington's armies, and on the equipment of American cruisers which preyed upon British commerce in European waters.<sup>55</sup>

Not a few of those cruisers were American only in name. When the sloop of war which conveyed Franklin across the ocean had deposited him at his destination, she ranged the Channel in company with two consorts, the *Lexington* and the *Dolphin*, the latter of which was armed with French cannon, and manned exclusively by French sailors. Within a few weeks the three ships made fifteen prizes; and their list of captures reached an enormous figure before any of them met their fate. When the *Lexington* was at last taken, her log-book, and the letters and papers found on board of her, proved that she had burned, sunk, and destroyed fifty-two British merchantmen.<sup>56</sup> The American captains found, in the harbours of Normandy and Brittany, a sure refuge from danger, a ready market for their prize-goods, and all indispensable facilities for repairing, re-fitting, and re-arming their vessels. They sailed in and out of Havre, and Lorient, and Nantes, taking in fifty barrels of gunpowder at one place, and filling up their crews with prime French sailors at another, as coolly and freely as if France were already at war with England. When the English ambassador remonstrated, the Versailles Cabinet gave him fair words, and ostentatiously prohibited any future breach of neutrality in sham orders which, after a brief show of obedience, were openly and systematically disregarded by the port authorities. If such things were done on the very coast of France, within forty leagues of her capital, it may well be believed that violence, and illegality, ran riot in distant quarters of the globe which lay outside the range of diplomatic surveillance and protest. The British

<sup>55</sup> Franklin, Deane, and Lee to the Committee of Secret Correspondence; Paris, January 17, 1777. Wharton's *Introduction*; Chapters 4 and 10.

<sup>56</sup> Journal of Samuel Curwen; October 4, 1777.

trade with the West Indies was devastated by ten or a dozen large corsairs, which hailed from Martinique and Guadeloupe; and which, though they displayed the Stars and Stripes, and carried letters of marque from Congress, were to all intents and purposes not American privateers, but French pirates. Out of a hundred and twenty-five fighting men, on board one of these formidable vessels, only two were citizens of the United States.<sup>57</sup>

Meanwhile the Ministers of King Louis, with less and less effort at concealment, hurried forward their military and naval preparations for a war which they had long foreseen, and which they now began to anticipate with lively satisfaction. A very strong squadron was assembled at Toulon, and an exceedingly powerful fleet at Brest. According to the advices which reached London, twenty-five frigates lay equipped for active service in Brest Harbour, as well as no fewer than thirty sail of the line, of which ten had been finished off within the last eighteen months. "These ships," (so the reporter stated,) "are supposed, by many judicious people in marine architecture, to be the finest moulded, and best built and completed, in the whole French navy, and perhaps in Europe. Upwards of ten thousand shipwrights, carpenters, caulkers, riggers, blockmakers, sailmakers, and ropemakers are collected at Brest. Every sailor has been ordered thither, from Dunkirk to Bayonne; and the Guinea, the Newfoundland, and the West Indian ships dare not put to sea till this fleet is manned and victualled."<sup>58</sup> It was a still more ominous circumstance that a great number of regi-

<sup>57</sup> *Mémoire Justificatif pour servir de Réponse à l'Exposé des Motifs de la Conduite du Roi de France relativement à l'Angleterre*; Londres, 1779. This masterpiece by Edward Gibbon, written in the French language with an Englishman's accuracy of statement, and concentration of purpose, was a special favourite with Lord Macaulay. In his copy of Gibbon's *Miscellaneous Works* he drew, with his pencil, a line of approbation down the entire margin of all its thirty-four pages. That was a compliment which, in the case of similar productions, he reserved for one or two of Swift's Examiners, and for three or four of Paul Louis Courier's inimitable pieces.

The *Evening Post* of May 31, 1777, gives a list of French privateers in the West Indies, with their gun-power, and the strength of their complements. They mostly carried above a hundred men, and from fourteen to eighteen cannon. A gentleman in the island of Grenada wrote to a friend in Liverpool that it was not the Americans, but the French from Martinique and St. Lucie, who were buccaneering in those seas. "It is now," he said, "become customary, as soon as a man hears that his vessel is taken, to go directly to Martinique, and buy as much as he can of his own property in again, as things are sold pretty cheap for cash. They are very expeditious with their sales; for they neither wait for condemnation, nor any other form."

<sup>58</sup> It then was a common practice, when war appeared imminent, to detain merchant vessels in harbour, so as to prevent a competition for the services of seamen between the State, and the private employer.

ments had been drawn down to the coast, and embodied in what was only too evidently intended for an army of invasion. Everything was ready. Biscuit for two months had been baked. Provisions were very cheap, and all the magazines full. The rank and file were punctually paid, and well clothed and disciplined. The old and the weak had been carefully weeded out from every battalion; and twenty-five thousand troops, the most effective in France, stood prepared for embarkation at a day's notice. The French naval officers were full of fight and their tongues were loud and unbridled. They looked to a war with England for the acceleration of their wretchedly slow promotion, and for the sadly needed rehabilitation of their professional repute. A young nobleman,—who, gallant and ambitious as he was, thought the war a crime,—has related how, from admiral to midshipman, they all rejoiced at the prospect of avenging those humiliating defeats which, half a generation before, had been inflicted on the French navy by Hawke and Boscawen.<sup>59</sup>

The strain was too severe to last. In the first week of December, 1777, tidings of Burgoyne's surrender arrived in Europe. On the way back from Passy, whither he had hurried to congratulate Franklin, Beaumarchais was thrown out of his carriage, and narrowly escaped a fatal accident. As soon as the surgeon allowed him ink and paper, he addressed the Comte de Vergennes in a vein of not very decorous exultation. "This propitious event," he wrote, "is balm to my wounds. Some god has whispered in my ear that King Louis will not disappoint the hopes of the faithful friends whom America has acquired for herself in France. It is my voice which calls out on their behalf from beneath my blankets: 'Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, Oh Lord! Lord, hear my prayer!'" Beaumarchais, as at this period of his life was generally the case, spoke the mind of Paris. When the news of Saratoga spread abroad in the city, the partisans of England disappeared from view; the theatres resounded with marital demonstrations; and the buzz of drawing-rooms and coffee-houses swelled into a unanimous cry for war. The demand in France for vigorous and immediate action was re-inforced by a potent auxiliary from beyond her own borders. When the New Year opened, the Elector of Bavaria died; the Emperor of Germany moved his troops across the Bavarian frontier; and Frederic the Great perceived that for himself, and for Prussia, the fateful hour had come. Resolved, so far as in him lay, that the French armies should be employed elsewhere than in Germany,

<sup>59</sup> *Mémoires du Duc des Cars*; Tome I., Chapitre 5.



he redoubled his efforts to tempt, and drive, Louis the Sixteenth into open hostilities against the British Crown. In a series of jumbled metaphors, which he would never have ventured to use when writing to Voltaire, he commanded his envoy in Paris to be all eyes and ears, to sift the matter to the bottom, and to shake every sail loose. "This," wrote the King, "is the moment for exerting yourself to the summit of your strength. You must force the deaf to hear, and the blind to see; and be sure that you wake up the lethargic to some purpose."<sup>60</sup>

The French Government did not need pressing. A hint was conveyed to Doctor Franklin, and his colleagues, that it would be agreeable to His Majesty if they renewed the offer which they had made him a twelvemonth back; and they acted on the intimation given. Some time was consumed in arranging the preliminaries; it was necessary that Spain should be consulted, or at all events kept informed, at each successive stage of the negotiation; but on the sixth of February 1778 the signatures were affixed to a Treaty of Commerce, and a Treaty of Amity and Alliance, between France and the United States. The French Government, paying a tribute by anticipation to the principle of the Monroe Doctrine, solemnly disclaimed all intention to re-conquer Canada. No condition whatever was exacted from America, except a promise that she would never purchase peace with Great Britain by consenting to resume her subjection to the British Crown. The ancient monarchy had dealt very handsomely with the young Republic; and the Prime Minister of Spain, who did his best to delay the business, and who disliked it all the more because he feared that his own Court would be compelled before long to follow suit, pronounced the conduct of the Versailles Cabinet a glaring instance of Quixotism. He compared the American Commissioners to those Roman Consuls whom the kings of Pontus and Cappadocia approached, in the attitude of suppliants, with a humble petition for their aid and support in war.<sup>61</sup>

On the twentieth March those Commissioners were granted the honour of a public reception at the Court of France. An immense throng assembled to watch Franklin pass. His bust and portrait had been multiplied by tens of thousands all the kingdom over; his miniature was carried in the lids of snuff-boxes, in watch-cases, and in the setting of rings; and the Gazettes of Europe, (said one who grudged

<sup>60</sup> Le Roi Frédéric à M. de Goltz, Berlin, 12 Janvier; Potsdam, 11 Février, 1778. These exhortations are written by the king's own hand, as a postscript to the official despatches.

<sup>61</sup> Donioli; Tome II., Chapitres 10, 11; Tome III., Chapitre 1.

him his celebrity,) contained a greater number of panegyrics on Franklin than on any other individual who had been born since Gazettes were printed. And now the whole tribe of his admirers, high and humble, had an opportunity of seeing the man himself, at the culminating hour of his prolonged and notable career. He was greeted by acclamations, and clapping of hands, in the streets of the town, in the quadrangles of the Palace, and even in the corridors which he traversed on his way to the Present Chamber. The first meeting between the King of France, and the delegates of the American Commonwealth, was a memorable and suggestive, but almost a silent, interview. On such occasions Louis the Sixteenth seldom found much to say, and never said the right thing; and the obligation to speak a sentence or two of spirited and sympathetic welcome, in the name of France, would have disconcerted even a cleverer, and a less honest, monarch. For at the bottom of his heart the King had not yet learned to love rebels; and he agreed with his more sober-minded subjects in regarding the contemplated assault upon England as "the most indecent of all wars."<sup>62</sup> Franklin has left no account of the ceremony; but it is on record that Versailles struck him as exceedingly dirty, and he doubtless would have liked well to give it the thorough scouring which, under his supervision, had so often been bestowed on the public buildings of Philadelphia. Meanwhile the signature of the treaties was no longer a state secret. The Marquis de Noailles had already placed the British Court in possession of the facts, with a display of frankness which came very near to impudence. King Louis, (so the communication ran,) was determined to cultivate the good intelligence notoriously subsisting between France and Great Britain, and had accordingly commissioned his ambassador to inform King George of a transaction so interesting to both countries. That was not the kind of honey to make such a dose palatable in England.<sup>63</sup>

Each of the two contracting parties was solemnly and specifically bound by the Treaty of Paris "to give no succour or protection, directly or indirectly," to the enemies and assailants of the other; and this was the manner in which the French observed their side of the engagement. They had caught England at a frightful disadvantage. She had not an ally in the world. The conflict with American rebellion had been a heavy drain upon her pecuniary resources, and had gravely impaired her credit. The price of her Consols had already fallen twenty points.

<sup>62</sup> *Mémoires de Duc des Cars*; Tome I., Chapitre 5.

<sup>63</sup> Doniol; Tome II., Chapitre 12.

Her field-army, and all the foreign auxiliaries whom she had been able to muster, were three thousand miles away across the ocean; and the British Islands were left very slenderly garrisoned at a moment when the naval strength of Britain had been allowed to drop far below the standard of safety. That was the pass to which our country had been reduced by the ineptitude and improvidence of her rulers. The apparent weakness, and the undoubted isolation, of England had tempted, and excited, the unprincipled ambition of the French Ministers; but, as has happened so often before and since, they had omitted to reckon with the haughty patriotism, the stern and dogged temper, and the indomitable pertinacity of the English people.

Lord North's colonial policy, from the first to last, was condemned and opposed by perhaps the largest, and certainly the best and wisest, section of the British community; but all men, of both parties, were of one and the same mind with reference to the French quarrel. They entertained no illusion about the difficulties and perils of the situation. They knew that, for many months to come, the war would be a struggle for the defence of hearth and home; but they were firmly resolved, before the account was closed, to make the French repent their cupidity, their insolence, and their treachery. The public indignation blazed up fierce and high. The more turbulent members of a nation which had been so often, and so egregiously, befooled by French ambassadors, paid very little regard to the sanctity of the diplomatic person; and the Marquis de Noailles, who left London at daybreak in order to avoid insult, was pelted as he passed through the streets of Canterbury on his road to Dover. Lord Stormont was at once recalled from Paris. The British Inspector of Fortifications at Dunkirk was forced to pack up his trunks, and leave the country; and this time he did not go back when the war was over. His presence on French soil constituted the one, and only, genuine grievance which France could allege against the British Government; and that grievance might easily have been remedied, with mutual consent, by a bloodless and amicable negotiation between the Foreign Offices of London and Versailles. It was a sorry spectacle, and a sad example, when the two leading nations of Europe were plunged headlong into an unnecessary, and objectless, war; from which, after a world-wide crash of arms, and a prodigal outpouring of treasure, they emerged at the end of five years with less than no gain, and very little glory.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE KING'S POLICY. PERSONAL GOVERNMENT. LORD CHATHAM. THE SEVENTH OF APRIL

THE capture of Burgoyne, the evacuation of Philadelphia by the British army, and the outburst of war between France and England in the spring of 1778, were decisive events in the history of the American Revolution. For ten years past the resources of the mother-country had been applied, lavishly and continuously, to the object of preventing, and, (when prevention failed,) of crushing the rebellion in her Western colonies. The King and his Ministers had devoted themselves with single-minded energy to the work of coercion and re-conquest, and Parliament had refused them none of the means which, in their judgment, the prosecution of that work demanded. Strongly worded Addresses of sympathy with the Ministerial policy; penal laws of novel character and terrible severity; armies larger than ever yet had been transported across any ocean; multitudes of foreign mercenaries; powerful fleets; ordnance and commissariat stores in unexampled profusion;—whatever the responsible government demanded, or even suggested, had been at once forthcoming. The forces of the rebellion had been pitted against the forces of the Crown during four hot and fierce campaigns, in which Great Britain, undistracted by European enemies, exerted much of her naval, and almost all her military strength against the power of the Revolution. And now, in July 1778, as the result of these sustained and strenuous endeavours, there was not a single province, or even a single township, where the civil administration was in Loyalist hands; and, outside the fortifications which protected the city of New York, the British army held not one square mile of soil on the mainland of the Northern and Central colonies.

Historians have in many cases overlooked, or undervalued, the dom-



inant circumstance which governed the military situation during all the closing years of the War of Independence. Ever since that week in March 1776 when General Howe abandoned the city of Boston to Washington's besieging army, and took himself and his forces away by sea to Halifax, New England was never again assailed by a determined and formidable invader. That vast tract of country, as large as Scotland and Ireland together, contained a population of men ardent for the Revolution, who had established a very effective political unanimity by the expulsion of all such as disagreed with them in political opinion. Farmers and sailors for the most part,—hardy, shrewd, and frugal, and as brave as need be on those occasions when there was nothing for it but to fight,—they yielded implicit and intelligent obedience to rulers chosen by themselves from among tried and respected members of their own community; and they always were ready to rally in force to the rescue whenever, and wherever, the Republic was in perilous straits. Connecticut, and Massachusetts, and New Hampshire formed a spacious, a plentifully stored, a powerfully garrisoned, and an altogether impregnable citadel of rebellion. It was the story over again of the Associated Eastern Counties of England during our Seventeenth Century struggle between the Parliament and the Crown. Once and only once, the safety of the old Puritan provinces was seriously menaced throughout the seven years which followed the evacuation of Boston. When Burgoyne, with his column of British and German infantry, and his horde of Indian warriors, came trailing down towards Albany in close proximity to the frontier of New England, thirteen thousand New England yeomen marched, at their own charges, to repel the aggressor; and, if the career of the English general had not been stopped short at Saratoga, he would have had twice that number upon him in front, flank, and rear, before ever he had penetrated into the heart of Massachusetts.

So it had long been with New England; and now the same immunity from hostile invasion had been secured for the rich and populous Central provinces as a consequence of the protracted campaign which began at Brandywine, and terminated at Monmouth Court-house. A large, an admirably appointed, and a valiant British army, conveyed and assisted by a noble fleet, had gone south from New York City in the July of 1777; had done its duty in conspicuous fashion; and twelve months afterwards had returned, not indeed defeated, but foiled, disappointed, and with very small expectation of ever repeating an experiment from which no military man, who understood the business

of his profession, anticipated even the possibility of success. Two great battles had been fought and won, and the capital city of the Revolution had been triumphantly entered by the royal troops; but, as the final result of the whole matter, the disputed territory was left, then and thereafter, in possession of the Revolutionary government. That government was destined to have its own troubles and difficulties as long as the war lasted; but they were troubles and difficulties of a nature to which the most firmly settled and long established monarchies have always been liable during a period of national emergency. There were wrangles and intrigues in Congress, just as there was quarrelling between Whigs and Tories at Westminster. There were outbreaks of turbulence in Washington's army, just as there was a mutiny at the Nore at a time when England was engaged, heart and soul, in her death struggle with the French Republic. The American Treasury flooded the country with issues of worthless paper, just as Frederic the Great had debased the silver coinage of Prussia in the agony of the Seven Years' War. But those are internal maladies of which a nation does not die; and the United States were now, to all intents and purposes, a self-contained and independent nation. The concluding phase of the great conflict was no longer a mere colonial rebellion, but an international war between Great Britain and America, in which the Americans were assisted by France, Spain, and Holland, and by the unconcealed and very efficacious sympathy of almost every other European power. The British Cabinet indeed, at a large expense of money, but with an utterly inadequate force of troops, made some ill-combined attempts to detach Virginia and the Carolinas from the Republican cause; but the British generals had as little intention of marching into New England, or of besieging Albany and Philadelphia, as George Washington had of invading Cheshire or Lancashire. The case was truly put by Nathaniel Greene in his own quiet manner. "We," (he wrote,) "cannot conquer the British at once; but they cannot conquer us at all. The limits of the British government in America are their out-sentinels." And, in the month of August 1778, those out-sentinels had been withdrawn from almost every post which they had hitherto occupied on the American continent.

The King himself had renounced all hope of subduing America by campaigns and battles. "It was a joke," (such was his own expression,) "to think of keeping Pennsylvania,"<sup>1</sup> and it was far beyond a joke even to contemplate the forcible recovery of New England; but his

<sup>1</sup> George the Third to Lord North; March 13th, 1778.

determination never to acknowledge the independence of the Americans, and to punish their contumacy by the indefinite prolongation of a war which promised to be eternal, was as fixed and resolute as ever. His intention henceforward was to retain his garrisons at New York and on Rhode Island, in Canada, and in Florida; to withdraw all the rest of his troops from America; and to employ them in attacking the French and Spanish possessions in the West Indies. Meanwhile aggressive hostilities against the Americans would be confined to the destruction of their coasting-trade, and the bombardment of their commercial ports; to sacking and burning their villages within a day's march of the sea-coast, and turning loose the Indians, from time to time, upon the more exposed and defenceless of the settlements which lay along their Western border. These operations, according to the royal view, would inspire courage in the partisans of the Crown throughout every colony; would promote faction in Congress; and would keep the rebels harassed, anxious, and poor, until the day when, by a natural and inevitable process, discontent and disappointment were converted into penitence and remorse. That was an infallible, and for the English taxpayer a very cheap method, which sooner or later would bring the Revolutionary diplomatists to their knees, and, (to use the King's own words,) "would make them come into what Great Britain might decently consent to."<sup>2</sup>

Such was the plan of action, and inaction, which George the Third had thought out for himself, and which, in a long succession of letters, he lovingly and minutely expounded to his Prime Minister. It was a foolish, and a most cruel policy;—cruel to the Loyalists who, after having been invited and induced to declare themselves for the Crown, were abandoned, unprotected by the presence of a British army, to the vengeance of their political opponents; cruel by the infliction of useless and objectless suffering, for an indefinite period of time, upon the civil population of the United States; and cruel, above all, to the people of Great Britain. The hour had come when our country, already weary of war, was to fight for her life against a combination of new and old European enemies who aimed at nothing short of her utter ruin, and her permanent humiliation. She would have to face the crisis alone, and shorn of no small portion of that native strength on which she had formerly been accustomed to rely. The military resources of America, from which Lord Chatham extracted such memorable advantage in the glorious past, were now employed not for, but against, the

<sup>2</sup> George the Third to Lord North; Jan. 13th, 1778.

mother-country. The people of Massachusetts who, when Chatham asked them for money, had taxed themselves to the amount of two pounds in every three of their year's income for the defence of the British empire, now spent their substance in keeping the flame of revolution ablaze in less wealthy States of the American Union. The successors of those provincial militiamen, who had marched in their thousands under Wolfe and Amherst, were now embattled beneath the Stars and Stripes in the ranks of the Continental army. The successors of those New England mariners, who had been proud to serve in the fleets of Hawke and Boscawen, were now scattered, on board of their innumerable cruisers, over the wide and narrow seas of both hemispheres, making prey on British commerce. Of all the infatuated ideas that have crossed the brain of a ruler none was ever more illusory than this notion that the Americans would sit with folded hands, and sheathed weapons, while England and France fought their quarrel out. The Revolution had bred and trained a multitude of restless and repressible warriors both on land and sea. Paul Jones, Anthony Wayne, and Harry Lee, and Morgan's sharpshooters, and Marion's fiery guerrillas, were not the men to desert the war-path because King George had ordained that active hostilities between England and America should slacken, and cease, up to the precise moment when he himself found it convenient to begin again. Unless he could bring himself to make peace with the United States the King was in the plight of a hunter who had hold of a wolf, or rather a grizzly bear, by the ears at a time when the most formidable wild beasts of the forest came ravening upon him.

The prospect was alarming to all far-sighted men; and the future, when it began to unfold itself, did not belie their most gloomy anticipations. As those black years rolled on, the dangers which beset our country were continually on the increase, and her hope of deliverance lessened. A conviction gradually crept over the public mind that England could never emerge, safe and erect, from the conflict with her European foes unless she consented to treat with Congress upon terms which Congress would accept. That view of the only possible solution became evident at last to the great majority of Englishmen, but not to the King. He, for his part, refused to make an acknowledgment which was the condemnation of his own colonial policy, and his own favourite system of parliamentary management. He had brought upon himself, and on his subjects, calamities and distress almost as bad as the plagues of Egypt; but his heart was hardened against America,



and he would not let her people go. He was unable to give any tenable reason for his persistence; he persuaded no man's judgment; and the time eventually arrived when he looked around him in vain for any sincere and disinterested adherent to his policy. That policy was clamorously defended by bribed senators, and pensioned courtiers, and the whole swarm of army-jobbers, and loanmongers, and fraudulent contractors who

“leach-like to their fainting country cling  
Till they drop blind in blood.”

It was supported in the Cabinet mainly by the Bedfords,—a knot of reckless statesmen, overloaded with debt, and intent only on keeping the Government in place for another, and yet another, quarter-day. The Prime Minister, and his more respectable colleagues, conscience-stricken and miserable, begged piteously to be allowed to resign their offices and permit the nation to be saved by less discredited and more independent men than themselves; but they served an inexorable master, who combated their prayers and expostulations sometimes with angry reproaches, and sometimes with earnest and pathetic appeals to their personal affection for himself. King George has met his deserts from the hands of posterity. Mr. Lecky, writing with unwonted passion, has pronounced that his course of action, during the later part of the American War, was “as criminal as any of the acts which led Charles the First to the scaffold.” More than one famous writer has exerted all the powers of his pen in drawing a parallel between George the Third and George Washington, to the immense disadvantage of the English monarch; but it is unfair to try an hereditary ruler by the standard which is applied to men who have risen, by pre-eminent merit, from a private station to the height of power. Kings should be compared with kings; and, if that course is adopted, it is impossible to doubt that the American difficulty would have been more prudently and rationally handled, from first to last, if the throne of Britain had been occupied, not by George the Third, but by a monarch endowed with the solid judgment, the calm temper, and the watchful and enlightened public spirit of his grandfather, or his great-grandson.

A most striking contrast between the position of England in 1763 and in 1777, and between the methods of government pursued respectively by George the Second and by his successor, was drawn by a pamphleteer of an ability unusual even in days when the ablest men

devoted their best thought and labour to the political pamphlet. Burke himself has not left behind him a more searching analysis, or a more unanswerable condemnation, of George the Third's favourite System of Personal Government, than this anonymous author. "So material a change," (he wrote,) "as a little space of time, yet short of a quarter of a century, hath wrought in our empire, cannot be ascribed to accident. Probably the history of mankind, and of human society, doth not furnish such another. Let us pause for a moment, and look up to that pinnacle of national glory from which we have fallen. Compared with this power,—the extent to which it might have been pushed, the advantages which might have been derived from it,—everything that hath gone before it is trifling and insignificant. I speak with the pride, the partiality, the enthusiasm of an Englishman. Alas! How are all our well-founded expectations destroyed! Where are we now to seek our glorious dependencies? ... The reign of George the Second afforded the ministers of his successors a large body of experience which a real statesman would have been fortunate in the possession of. The maxims pursued in that reign were wise, not because they were to be accounted for upon this or that theory, but because their consequences were salutary. Strange as it will tell to posterity, this body of experience was not sapped by degrees, but at once, totally, and in all its parts, overthrown by those who were called to the Administration after his present Majesty's accession. As if the public happiness were a subject of envy to the courtiers, that happiness was to be reversed. Men, who have never given a proof of capacity, were placed in the front offices; and the doctrine of the Court was that the King's choice was not to be questioned, and that the Royal favour was to stand in the place of all qualifications for public employment."<sup>3</sup>

That was most indubitably the doctrine of the Court; and for eighteen years, with one brief interval, George the Third's ministers had been men of his own choice, and to his own mind. The nation, by the end of that time, was satiated with experience as to the true worth, in peace or in war, of a Government selected by such a process. The internal administration of the Earl of Bute, the Duke of Grafton, and Lord North had been marked by abuses which loom very large in our political history, and in our national literature. Their repeated assaults on the freedom of the Press, and the freedom of Election, kept Parliament in a chronic state of factious and barren agitation,

<sup>3</sup> *Address to the public by an Unconnected Whig; 1777.* From the collection of pamphlets at the Athenæum Club.

and plunged the City of London into a fever of excitement varied by not unfrequent ebullitions of popular fury. Great, indeed, were the issues involved in those long and angry controversies; and yet, however flagrant were the scandals of our domestic history, the world was only half acquainted with the personal character, and the qualifications for exalted office, of King George's favourite statesmen, until, in a disastrous hour of the British empire, they began to exhibit their improvidence and incapacity to a far larger circle of spectators, and on a more conspicuous stage.

Unwarned by the recent lesson of the Stamp Act, which had been written in such glaring characters across so many pages of our story, these fatal rulers insisted on making a grave and far-reaching innovation in the fiscal arrangements of America without the smallest particle of consideration for American opinion; and then, having irritated all the thirteen colonies, and driven Massachusetts to disaffection and despair, they entered upon a headlong course of vindictive repression. Parliament which, under their leadership, could seldom or never find time for the long arrears of useful legislation so urgently needed by the people of Great Britain, was called upon to pass a whole series of Coercion Acts devised against the people of America. The military occupation of their townships; the ruin of their cities; the annihilation of their commerce; the extinction of their chartered rights,—those were some of the spells by which these clumsy magicians undertook to exorcise that spirit of rebellion which they themselves had raised. But it is a work of superfluity, at this distance of time, to pile up an indictment against men who already stood self-condemned before the tribunal of their own contemporaries. In February 1778 Lord North informed a dumb-founded, and almost incredulous, House of Commons that his Cabinet had resolved to abandon the Tea Duty; to renounce the power of taxing America without her own consent; to repeal the Boston Port Act, the Massachusetts Government Act, and the Act for Restraining the Trade and Commerce of the New England Colonies; and to surrender every claim and demand, whether trivial or essential, for the sake of enforcing which England had fought a dozen battles, had spent seventy million pounds, and was now embarked upon what threatened to be the most perilous European war in which she had ever yet been implicated.

The men whom the King delighted to honour had blundered egregiously as Home Ministers and as Colonial Ministers; and by this time they had given a more than sufficient sample of their value as

War Ministers. During the opening years of the American rebellion our soldiers never came short of their duty, and our regimental officers performed their part to admiration. It could not indeed be denied that British generals in the field had not always made the most of their opportunities; but the prime cause of their failure,—as every competent critic, from Frederic the Great downwards, perceived then, and as every student of our military history recognizes now,—had been the senseless scheme of strategy which was dictated to them from Downing Street. It was the unhappy fate of Great Britain to enter upon an internecine war with France, and in all probability with half Europe, under the guidance of statesmen who had wasted four campaigns over an unsuccessful attempt to put down an insurrection in our own colonies. All opponents of the ministers, and many more of their supporters than chose to admit it, contemplated the future with distrust and dismay; and their worst fears were justified by the event. After four more years of squandered resources, and mismanaged hostilities, and baffled diplomatic efforts, Lord North and his partners had been judged and condemned by every Englishman who was not paid to praise them. What their best friends thought about them in the spring of 1782 was bluntly expressed by the most staunch of Tories. “Such a bundle of imbecility,” (said Doctor Samuel Johnson,) “never disgraced a country. If they sent a messenger into the City to take up a printer, the messenger was taken up instead of the printer, and committed by the sitting Alderman. If they sent one army to the relief of another, the first army was defeated and taken before the second arrived. I will not say that what they did was always wrong; but it was always done at a wrong time.” It was idle to hope that England would ever be extricated by such feeble and awkward hands from the net of danger in which she was so deeply entangled. No more urgent and vital question has ever been submitted to Parliament than the expulsion from power of those deplorable ministers, and the abolition of that system of Court favouritism which had planted and rooted them in office. And so it came about that, during the later period of the American War, the Senate was even more important than the camp; and the centre of interest was transferred from the banks of the Delaware and the Hudson rivers to the polling-booths of Great Britain, and the floor of the House of Commons.

Amidst the turmoil of these anxious and troubled years Lord Chatham presented as noble, and in some respects as pathetic, a figure as



any which stands in the gallery of history. Whether or not he was the greatest of Englishmen, he had, beyond all question whatever, done the greatest work for England; and he lived to see the best part of that work undone by the hands of others. Goethe has complained, somewhat sadly, that, if a man accomplishes something for the sake of the world, the world will take good care that he shall never do it a second service; and there is no more striking exemplification of Goethe's remark than the story of Lord Chatham and the British empire. When Chatham, after his long and mysterious illness, once more appeared in public he had regained something of his ancient vigour, and all his unequalled judgment of State affairs on a large and comprehensive scale. But those rare powers of insight and prevision did not make for his happiness; for he returned to find the goodly fabric of political liberty and national pre-eminence, which his own hands had raised, sapped to the foundation by the perversity of his successors. The great ex-minister knew America with a knowledge founded on long experience, and intense interest and affection; he could read the motives and ambitions of foreign Courts as in an open book; he was minutely acquainted with the naval and military resources of Great Britain, as compared with those of her European ill-wishers and rivals; and he discerned, at a very early moment, the inevitable issue of Lord North's colonial policy. Before ever the Boston Port Bill had left the House of Commons Chatham foresaw and foretold the long series of calamities which was sure to follow. "A fatal desire," he wrote, "to take advantage of this guilty tumult of the Bostonians, in order to crush the spirit of liberty among the Americans in general, has taken possession of the heart of the Government. If that mad and cruel measure should be pushed, one need not be a prophet to say that England has seen her best days."<sup>4</sup>

During several generations after Chatham's death his legitimate fame suffered, in no small degree, from the indiscriminating admiration and gratitude of his fellow-countrymen. Some of his most characteristic attributes were lost and forgotten in the popular tradition of the overpowering orator who conquered France by animating our nation at home, and our soldiers and sailors abroad, with his own patriotic audacity and self-devotion. But his contemporaries knew him likewise as a painstaking and all but omniscient administrator, for whom no precautions were too humble, and no particulars too dull; as a master of strategy, and a consummate judge of military merit in the generals and

<sup>4</sup> The Earl of Chatham to the Earl of Shelburne; Burton Pynsent, March 20, 1774.

admirals who fought our country's battles on land and sea. The diligence of recent historians has disclosed to us the full secret of those methods by which Chatham repaired defeat and organised victory. His power of speech, it is true, was among the wonders of the world; and it was the gift of nature. Members of his family, before and after him, had at their command an inexhaustible store of passionate and picturesque language which some of them applied to trivial and unworthy uses; and his second son inherited the Pitt eloquence, perfected to the very highest standard of culture and precision.<sup>5</sup> The spontaneous rush of Chatham's rhetoric, apart from the mastery which it gave him over the emotions of his audience, was of practical advantage to the quality of his statesmanship; for he was spared all the preliminary trouble of picking words, and framing sentences, and could devote his whole attention to dealing with events and realities. When he had resolved upon the substance of his policy, the explanation and the defence of it might safely be left to the unstudied inspiration of the moment. "Bitter satire," (wrote Horace Walpole,) "was Pitt's forte. When he attempted ridicule, which was very seldom, he succeeded happily. But where he chiefly shone was in exposing his own conduct;" and his conduct during the Seven Years' War, was of a nature to bear the closest and most searching exposition. Walpole, a loyal son, was fond of contrasting Chatham's oratory with his own father's shrewd and homely mode of addressing the House of Commons, and he was always fair to both his heroes. Sir Robert's strength, (wrote Horace,) was "understanding his own country"; and his foible may be said to have been inattention to other countries, which made it impossible that he should thoroughly, and for all purposes, understand his own. But Chatham understood every Government in Europe, every Native State on the

<sup>5</sup> Chatham's grandfather, the Governor of Madras, (as Lord Rosebery's readers know,) was a man of exceptionally masterful and emotional nature, whose correspondence was conducted on a high level of emphasis and passion. His denunciations of all who ventured to criticise his very high-handed methods of Indian administration, or to question the genuineness of his Pitt diamond, display a wealth of invective which leaves no doubt of the source from which the Great Commoner derived his eloquence. The family characteristics were not less deeply marked in a succeeding generation. The biographer of Lady Hester Stanhope, Chatham's granddaughter, was lost in perpetual admiration of her forcible and impetuous volubility. "She was," we are told, "unceasingly employed in laying bare the weakness of our common nature," or, in plainer language, in haranguing about the shortcomings of other people. On that topic she could hold an audience, or more usually a single auditor, for many hours at a time. The performance was, beyond all doubt, an extraordinary exhibition of rhetorical powers; and the voice was the voice of Chatham. "Good God!" said her uncle, the Prime Minister: "If I were to shut my eyes I should think it was my father."

sea-board of Hindostan, and every British and foreign colony in the Western Hemisphere. One of his contemporaries, who was a well-known and much respected man of business, pronounced that, "while Lord Chatham's abilities were transcendent, his knowledge was almost boundless:"<sup>6</sup>—his knowledge, that is to say, of what was worth knowing, for his want of acquaintance with unimportant things was a standing marvel to that large portion of London society which concerned itself about little else.

The world-wide magnitude of Chatham's successful operations is unparalleled in modern history. Napoleon's comprehensive glance swept as wide an horizon of land and sea, and his armies were vastly greater than those that contended in the Seven Years' War; but Napoleon's schemes ended in a huge ruin, while the English minister made his country the queen of nations. The elder Pitt's arrangements for a campaign in Germany, or an expedition across the ocean, remain on record as a model which only too few of his successors have been at the pains to imitate. He ascertained beforehand the force required for each successive undertaking; and he provided that force, and something over. He selected his commanders with care, and trusted them absolutely,—depicting to them, in broad but intelligible outlines, the nature of their allotted task; leaving them a generous latitude; and perplexing them with no contradictory or ambiguous suggestions.<sup>7</sup> But he never spared ink and paper when dealing with a point of practical detail. His letters on business were no formal departmental despatches, drawn up by subordinates, with the great man's signature scrawled at the foot of a half-read document. He took infinite personal trouble to secure that the naval and military authorities should be aware of each other's needs, and should play into each other's hands. On the eve of the final struggle with the French in Canada his admiral on the American station was duly informed that the Government at home had taken up twenty thousand tons of transport, with six months' food for all on board, and equipped in every respect for the reception of ten thousand troops on the scale of a ton and a half per man. On the same

<sup>6</sup> Letter of January 1770 from Thomas Bentley, the partner of Josiah Wedgwood.

<sup>7</sup> "I am to signify to you the King's pleasure that you do attempt, with the utmost vigor, the reduction of Canada. At the same time His Majesty, placing great confidence in your Judgment and Capacity, is pleased to leave entirely to your discretion by what Avenues you will penetrate into the same; and whether you shall judge it most expedient to operate in one Body, or by detaching, in the Manner you mention, a Corps to the right, and another to the left." Mr. Secretary Pitt to General Amherst; Whitehall, March 10, 1759.

day General Amherst was told how many of the ten thousand men, and the six thousand field-tents, were consigned to him for the furtherance of his own objects, and how many had been shipped direct to General Wolfe at Louisburg; and Mr. Secretary Pitt,—a very different war-minister from the nobleman who devised the campaign of Saratoga,—did not forget to supply General Amherst with a copy of the Secret Instructions which had been sent to General Wolfe. Special attention, according to the medical lights of the day, was bestowed on the physical comfort and welfare of the troops; although it was clearly laid down that, in the last resort, no subsidiary considerations should be allowed to interfere with the exigencies and opportunities of active warfare. Brigadier General Wolfe having represented that it would be of the greatest utility to the health of the army to have a quantity of molasses to make spruce beer as a preservative from scurvy, measures had been adopted for enabling the privates to purchase that liquor at a halfpenny a quart. “But it is the King’s express pleasure,” wrote Pitt, “that you do not, on account of the Molasses above-mentioned, delay for one moment the Embarkation and Sailing of the ‘Troops.’”

The elder Pitt, as became a great Englishman, was a maritime strategist of the highest order. His instructions to Admiral Boscawen, preparatory to the siege of Louisburg, have been justly admired as a shining example in their own class. Pitt there laid down the doctrine that a naval administrator,—with the view of securing the passage across the sea of his own reinforcements, and intercepting the reinforcements of the enemy,—should concentrate his ships of war in overpowering force at the point of departure and the point of arrival, and allow his transports to find a way for themselves over the comparatively secure expanse of the mid-ocean.<sup>8</sup> If Lord North’s Board of Admiralty, in the autumn of 1781, had acted in accordance with that sound principle of warfare, the irreparable disaster of Yorktown would in all likelihood have been averted. Pitt knew geography to some purpose. He had the strength, the destination, and the probable latitude and longitude, of every French and English squadron on the high seas always present to his mind. When planning a naval campaign he never forgot, (so he himself tells us,) that the progress of a fleet is regulated “by the pace of the lag-ship”; and he took care to find out how slowly, or how quickly, that lag-ship sailed. The minute events of war were his delight and recreation, as his generals in the front were well aware. Lord Amherst’s journal-letters,—obviously concealing nothing, obvi-

<sup>8</sup> Julian Stafford Corbett’s *England in the Seven Years’ War*; volume I, chapter 13.



ously exaggerating nothing, and narrating a string of homely and petty occurrences, lighted up from time to time by the announcement of splendid successes,—kept the Secretary of State loyally and frankly informed of all that happened while the British army was hewing its path towards Canada through the primeval forest. In fewer sentences, (for Wolfe and Boscawen had just then less time to write,) Mr. Pitt was told how matters had gone at Louisburg;—how the surf ran so high that it seemed almost impossible to land even if the French artillery had not been firing across it; how many boats were swamped, and how many dashed to pieces by the cannon-balls; how long it took to drive the enemy from the beach, leaving behind them “thirty-five guns, great and small”; and how it rained so hard all through the siege that no British soldier had a dry thread upon him until the place surrendered with twenty-four companies of marines, and four battalions of white-coated infantry. The pride and satisfaction of an officer, selected to carry home the tidings of victory, were enhanced by the prospect of being cross-examined by Mr. Pitt with the well-informed and sympathetic curiosity which is the most valued compliment that a civilian can pay to a soldier. “I send Major Barré with this,” (so Amherst wrote after the capture of Montreal,) “that you may receive all the intelligence of the apparent state of everything in this country.” When the Major appeared in Downing Street, with a French bullet in his face which he carried to his grave, the fine qualities displayed by him during his interviews with the Minister laid the foundation of a warm personal and political friendship between Pitt and Barré; and that friendship, in after years, was nobly and generously recognised by Pitt’s son.

Pitt’s lofty and sterling nature was conspicuously visible in his relations with the colonial authorities of America, and, through them, with the American people. In a contest for British honour and British interests which was waged on many shores, and on every sea, it was no small advantage that a statesman, who for the time being was supreme ruler of the empire, should treat men of British descent, all the world over, as self-respecting and self-governing citizens. When he had a point of importance to carry, he began his despatch by setting forth, in one or two of his rolling sentences, the reasons why he called upon the American colonists for exertions and sacrifices; and he scrupulously and exactly defined the nature, and the limit, of the demands which he made upon their patriotism. His Majesty, (so the letter would commence, for in his public communications he always spoke of George

the King rather than of William Pitt the Minister,) not doubting that all his faithful and brave subjects would continue most cheerfully to co-operate with, and second to the utmost, the large expense and extraordinary succours supplied by the mother-country for their preservation and future security by completing the reduction of all Canada, urged them to raise a stated number of regiments proportioned to the resources of every province. "The King," (Pitt went on to say,) "is pleased to furnish the Men, so raised as above, with Arms, Ammunition, and Tents, as well as to order provisions in the same manner as is done to the rest of the King's Forces. The whole that His Majesty expects and requires from the several Provinces is the Levying, Clothing, and Pay of the Men."<sup>9</sup> That was how Pitt's requisitions were worded; and they met with prompt and eager obedience. Massachusetts,—so close-fisted against any attempt to take her money without asking her own consent,—gave Pitt a hundred and forty thousand pounds in twenty months, and loaded herself with debt when the yield from current taxation shewed symptoms of dwindling. The less populous and wealthy colonies strained their credit, and ransacked their villages for recruits, at the call of a leader who accompanied his appeals for assistance with explanations which they believed, and exhortations which fired their public spirit. The Governor of South Carolina, writing in the name of his province, expressed an earnest hope that, under the blessing of Almighty God, the next campaign would expel the French from the Continent of America; that the inhabitants of that Continent would for the future be safe from an insatiable and cruel hereditary enemy; and that Mr. Secretary Pitt himself might live to enjoy the effects of the vigorous measures which he had so wisely promoted. Under that glorious administration every member of our race, in whatever corner of the universe he had been born, deemed it, like William Cowper,

<sup>9</sup> Mr. Secretary Pitt to the Governors of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, and New Jersey; Whitehall, January 7th 1760.

This circular is quoted from *The Correspondence of William Pitt, when Secretary of State, with Colonial Governors, and Military and Naval Commissioners in America*; edited by Gertrude Selwyn Kimball. It is a work to be studied along with Mr. Corbett's *England in the Seven Years' War*. In the year that these excellent books were published there appeared an English translation of Albert von Ruville's *William Pitt, Earl of Chatham*; but,—whatever valuable qualities this writer's work may possess,—his analysis of Chatham's character, and his theory with regard to Chatham's motives, may be laid aside in amazed silence.

“praise enough  
To fill the ambition of a private man  
That Chatham’s language was his mother tongue,  
And Wolfe’s great name compatriot with his own.”<sup>10</sup>

Those were the arts by which Chatham secured for England the affection of her colonists, and those were the methods by which he brought her enemies to rout and ruin. But power and responsibility had been transferred to other hands than his; and the statesman, who had extended and consolidated our empire, was thenceforward a sad and anxious, though not a silent, spectator of a policy which had brought about his disruption, and which threatened to result in its downfall. He had combated at each successive stage, with weighty arguments and glowing words, the action of the King’s government in relation to America. That action produced the consequences which from the first he had predicted. America renounced her allegiance to the British Crown; and it was too late for even Chatham’s oratory to undo the mischief. He did not, however, deem himself absolved from the duty of counselling Parliament; and, when the occasion presented itself, he gave utterance to warnings and prophecies every one of which was scouted by men in office, and every one of which was fulfilled by the event. He had told the Ministers, at a very early moment, that it was idle to dream of reducing the whole of British America to obedience with three or four slender brigades of infantry. In the late war, (so he reminded them,) the expulsion of the French from a comparatively small part of that region had required the exertions, “during five full years, of forty thousand men, under the command of one of the ablest generals in Europe, Sir Jeffery Amherst.” His advice was neglected. Only ten thousand troops were sent; and, so far from overrunning the thirteen colonies, they were not enough to defend even the single town of Boston, where they would have been captured to a man if they had not been withdrawn by sea.

France was Chatham’s ancient adversary, whose projects he divined as a swordsman divines, and anticipates, the intention of his opponent to plant a thrust. In January 1775 the Ministers, with a light heart, and no eye for future European complications, exhorted the House of Lords to approve by an overwhelming majority the forcible subjugation of the revolted colonies. Chatham reminded his brother Peers that America did not stand alone in the world of nations. “France,” he said, “has

<sup>10</sup> *The Task*; ii, 235.

her full attention upon you. War is at your door; and carrying the question here by your votes tonight will not save your country from the extremity of peril." And now in December 1777, a few days after the reception of the news from Saratoga, the Cabinet thought it well to adjourn Parliament over the space of six entire weeks, as if it were a matter of paramount importance that the Peers and Commons should not miss their Christmas hunting. Lord North, in the Lower House, had encountered the objections which were offered to the proposal by an easy and offhand assurance that France and Spain had no mind to molest us, and that, in any case, England was prepared at all points to meet either of them, or both of them together. Such was not the view of Lord Chatham. "At so tremendous a season," he said, "it does not become your Lordships, the great hereditary council of the nation, to retire to your country-seats in quest of joy and merriment, while the real state of public affairs calls for the fullest exertions of your wisdom. It is your duty, my Lords, to advise your sovereign, to be the protectors of your country, to be conscious of your own weight and your own authority." Lord Chatham wished to keep Parliament sitting, not for the purpose of making fine speeches, but in order to lose no opportunity of enforcing practical suggestions of immense importance, and bringing to the public knowledge significant and momentous facts. He was almost the first, and quite the most earnest, to recommend an immediate embodiment of the Militia. Using the modesty of true greatness, as if he had been rather the witness, than the author, of those judicious measures which in former days had saved and aggrandised England,—he told his audience how, during the late war, he had enjoyed the satisfaction of visiting no less than three extensive and admirably situated camps, swarming with a well-trained and well-armed Militia. "I remember," he said, "when appearances were not nearly so melancholy and alarming as at present, that there were more troops in Kent alone, for the defence of that county, than there are now in the whole island."

Chatham's speeches made all the deeper impression upon the country at large because, for the most part, they remained without an answer in the assembly to which they were addressed. We are told that "it became fashionable, if not a rule of conduct, with the Court Lords" to treat his censures and proposals with an affected indifference, and to talk contemptuously about his waning powers.<sup>11</sup> But that sort of conversation was reserved for the dinner-table and the supper-

<sup>11</sup> *History of Europe in the Annual Register of 1778*; chapter 3.



table; and the Treasury Bench in the House of Peers, when Chatham was concerned, seemed seldom or never in a fighting mood. Lord Sandwich and Lord Weymouth, on whom the main burden of the debate lay, were voluble enough when there was a meek or discredited opponent in face of them; but they both had the strongest personal reasons for not venturing to engage at close quarters with an antagonist, himself of unimpeachable character, who wielded with such terrible effectiveness the lash of moral reprobation. The Ministry, unable to refute so powerful an adversary in open debate, endeavoured to disparage his authority by the agency of mercenary pens. In pamphlets written by State pensioners, and in newspaper paragraphs paid for out of the Secret Service money, Lord Chatham's past history was held up to reproach, and his good fame bespattered by calumnies. Those were not, and never had been, Chatham's own weapons. "Mr. Pitt," (it has been said,) "to his immortal honour, employed no writer to justify his administration. He nobly declared in the House of Commons that he wished for no approbation of his measures but that which was constitutional. The moment those who were the best judges of his conduct disapproved it, he would withdraw into retirement."<sup>12</sup> As a senator he always answered argument with argument; and as a war-minister, (so Horace Walpole finely said,) he replied to abuse by victories.

Lord North's government reverted to Sir Robert Walpole's practice of subsidising the press, and carried it to a height which it had never attained before. It was matter of common knowledge that many thousand pounds of public money were distributed annually among people who, in the language of the Opposition, were "a set of dishonest scribes"; but, whatever epithets these gentry may have deserved, they had the merit of keeping faith with their employers whenever they were told off to attack the Earl of Chatham. "The Duke of Newcastle," according to the *Morning Post*, "used to say that Mr. Pitt's talents would not have got him forty pounds a year in any country but this. His lips dropped venom. When he had obtained enormous legacies, pensions, and sinecures, the mask fell off. His treachery to the cause of the people still loads his memory with curses." Lord Chatham had insisted, with extraordinary force, upon the distinction which should be drawn between German rulers who hired out soldiers to put down the rebellion in America, and German rulers who, in the Seven Years' War, had sent their troops to serve with British allies, and in British pay, for the purpose of repelling a French invader from the soil of

<sup>12</sup> *London Evening Post*; Saturday August 7, to Tuesday August 10, 1779.

the German Fatherland. The ministerial journalists professed themselves unable to see any difference between the two cases. "That vain old dotard with the short memory," (such was the description of Chatham given by one of the ablest among them,) "seems to have forgot the meaning and use of auxiliary troops. I am astonished that this new-made Lord should, in the House of Peers, take the liberty to abuse his betters, the German Princes, who are much older gentlemen than himself, with all the blackguardism of modern patriotism, when so many Noblemen sit there who can claim their pedigrees from a descent of above a hundred years. If this goes on much longer he, and his gang, shall hear some private anecdotes not very pleasing to them."<sup>13</sup> To us it seems strange that an Englishman should ever have lived who thought a Landgrave of Hesse, and a Margrave of Anspach, the betters of Chatham.

The stream of Treasury gold which poured through the subterranean chanel of literature was wasted money for any effect which it produced upon the serious judgment of the country. The times were such that Englishmen did not care to take their politics from Grub Street. When the tidings from Saratoga were followed closely by an announcement that France and America had joined hands,—when a conviction flashed upon the public mind that we had no army at home, and only an outward show of a war-fleet in the channel;—the world, as if by a single and simultaneous impulse, bethought itself of the statesman who, just twenty years back, had rescued England from almost as poor a plight, and within the space of thirty months had mounted her on a pinnacle of triumph. The hour had come round once again, and the man was still there. Everyone who had anything to lose, everyone who cared for the interests and honour of the nation, joined in a cry for the return to office of the Earl of Chatham. The journalists in Government pay began to change their note. One newspaper, which had repeatedly assured its readers that, if ministers had taken Lord Chatham's advice, they would have rendered themselves the laughing-stock of Europe, suddenly inquired why the great Earl, whose health was now completely re-established, held aloof from attendance in Parliament. It was no answer, (said another Tory journalist,) to repeat that Lord Chatham was past his prime. Mr. Pitt had always been thought older than he really was, "for the same reason that the same error prevailed with regard to the celebrated Voltaire," because he came into public life earlier than most of his contempo-

<sup>13</sup> Letter from Vindex in the *Morning Post*; Dec. 11, 1777.

raries, and was already a distinguished ornament of the House of Commons at the age of six-and-twenty. It soon became evident that those gentlemen were writing under orders. Lord Barrington, who then was still Secretary at War, took upon himself to inform the King that a general dismay existed in all ranks and all conditions, arising from an opinion that the Government was unequal to the crisis;—an opinion, (he confessed,) so universal that it prevailed among those who were dependent on, and attached to, the ministers, and even among those ministers themselves. “Lord North,” (in the works of Mr. Lecky), “implored the King to accept his resignation, and to send for Lord Chatham. Bute, the old Tory favourite, breaking his long silence, spoke of Chatham as indispensable. Lord Mansfield, the bitterest and ablest rival of Chatham, said with tears in his eyes that, unless the King sent for Chatham, the ship would go down.”<sup>14</sup>

Men of all parties, save and except the Bedfords, were united in calling for Lord Chatham. But the King’s repugnance was inexorable. In these days we are told that History has no right to concern itself with Ethics. Whether such be the case or not, a prudent historian will gladly leave to the moralist the unpleasant task of explaining the motives of George the Third’s hatred for a statesman who had made him the greatest monarch in the world; who was old enough to be his father; and whose reverence for the kingly office, and the kingly person, was blamed as excessive even by indulgent critics. The royal vocabulary, often bald and barren, teemed with depreciatory epithets whenever the subject under discussion was the greatest of living Englishmen. Lord Chatham’s political conduct was so abandoned,—it was so absurd to expect from him gratitude, “when the whole tenour of his life had shown him incapable of that honourable sentiment,”—that he, and his family, must hope for no mark of favour from the Crown “until death, or decrepitude, had put an end to him as the trumpet of sedition.”<sup>15</sup> That was the strain in which King George had habitually written about the Earl of Chatham; and, when the leading men in politics, with Lord North at their head, urged him to accept the object of his dislike as Prime Minister, his anger was hot and his resolution stubborn. He acceded to the pretence of a negotiation; but the conditions which he exacted were such as to render an agreement

<sup>14</sup> *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*; chapter 14.

<sup>15</sup> George the Third to Lord North; Kew, August 9, 1775.

impossible;<sup>16</sup> and, lest there should be any mistake about the royal intentions, Lord North was informed specifically that, if Lord Chatham should ask for an interview with the King before giving his final reply, the King would certainly refuse to see him. No one could expect,—no one, then or now, could wish,—that Chatham should have stooped to accept such an offer. The attempt at an arrangement fell through, to the undisguised relief and satisfaction of the monarch; while Lord North sadly and reluctantly abandoned the hope of transferring his responsibilities to the group of statesmen for whom his Sovereign could find no more respectful appellation than “Lord Chatham and his crew.”

George the Third might safely have dispensed with that ungracious outburst of self-revelation. The famous statesman, whom he misunderstood and misprized, had no desire whatever to impose his services upon an unwilling master. Ambition was extinct in Chatham’s breast; and, though patriotism sat enthroned there as supreme as ever, he felt that he was no longer able to fulfil the expectations of his countrymen. His health was shattered beyond repair; and his strength would not support the ceaseless vigilance, and relentless labour, which devolve upon a Minister who is directing, instead of leaving to the hazard of fortune, the operations of a great war. An ever-present sense of fatigue, both of mind and body, warned him that the day was already spent, and the night very close at hand. It was a calm and mellow sunset. Nowhere might be found a more united family or a more peaceful home. Lady Chatham, a true helpmate in joy or sorrow, was one with her husband in affection, in opinion, and in her views of duty. They had around them their three sons, whom they were launching into life, which in the case of Chatham meant that he was giving them to

<sup>16</sup> The King laid down the limits of concession, for Lord North’s guidance, in a sentence of which the grammar was confused, but the meaning plain, and the spirit imperious and inexorable. “If,” he said, “Lord Chatham agrees to support your Administration, or, (if you like the expression better,) the fundamentals of the present Administration, and Lord North at the head of the Treasury, Lords Suffolk, Gower, and Weymouth in great offices of their own inclination, Lord Sandwich in the Admiralty, Thurloe Chancellor, and Wedderburne a Chief Justice, I will not object to see that great man when Lord Shelburne and Dunning, with Barré, are placed already in offices; but I solemnly declare nothing shall bring me to treat personally with Lord Chatham.” *King George the Third to Lord North: Queen’s House, March 16th, 1778. 28 minutes past 8 a.m.*

In the course of this letter the King speaks of his unwillingness to accept the services of “that perfidious man”; and Lord Russell, in his memorials of Fox, quotes the expression as meaning Chatham. Macaulay notes in the margin of the book: “No. Lord Shelburne certainly.”



his country. The eldest son, as soon as the French war became imminent, had returned to the military profession; and he now was on the eve of sailing to join the garrison at Gibraltar, which henceforward was the scene of danger. The third son, a lad of great promise, and amiable disposition,—“the young tar,” said Chatham, “who may, by the favour of heaven, live to do some good,”—had just passed as lieutenant, and was looking forward to his first independent command.<sup>17</sup> The second son, William, marked out by nature for a great career, was waiting for one-and-twenty, and meanwhile served his political apprenticeship as the confidential assistant, and inseparable companion, of his father. “My dear Secretary,” the old man called him:—and he added, with a humorous side-glance at the King and his Secretaries of State, “I wish *Somebody* had as good and as honest an one.” The new year of 1778 found Chatham fairly well, and exempt from pain and discomfort. “Perhaps,” (so he told his physician,) “I may last as long as Great Britain.” Early in February he had an attack of gout which aroused hope, rather than apprehension, in those of his friends and well-wishers who, according to the accepted theory of their generation, regarded that disease as a remedy. Lord Granby wrote in much the same language as his brave father might have addressed to Mr. Secretary Pitt many years before. “I hope,” said the young Peer, “that your Lordship’s gout continues favourable, and will be productive of such a stock of health as may enable your Lordship to save us from the cloud of misfortune which impends over our heads.” But Chatham did not mistake his own symptoms and sensations, and was aware that the end could not be far distant.

Lord Chatham, while the nation clamoured to be governed by him, stood almost isolated in his attitude towards the question of the moment. He made no secret of the policy which he would adopt if he was raised to power. He would cease to contend in arms with the American rebellion. He would withdraw every British and German soldier; abrogate every obnoxious statute; renounce every disputed claim; and trust, for the future reunion of the colonies with the mother-country, to the healing influence of time and the bonds of a common race and a common religion. In the debate on the Address of November 1777 he had given the House of Lords his opinion about the con-

<sup>17</sup> James Charles Pitt served on the West India station under Rodney, who appointed him to the *Hornet* sloop, where he died of fever at the age of twenty. When Lord Chatham sank down unconscious in the House of Lords it was observed by the reporters that the youth, though apparently not more than seventeen or eighteen years old, displayed a sailor’s handiness and presence of mind “in assisting his venerable father.”

flict with America. "In a just and necessary war," he then said, "to maintain the rights and honour of my country, I would strip the shirt off my back to support it. But in such a war as this, unjust in its principle, impracticable in its means, and ruinous in its consequences, I would not contribute a single effort, or a single shilling." On that point he agreed with Lord Rockingham and the Duke of Richmond in the Peers, and with Sir George Savile and General Conway in the Commons; but they, one and all, recognised,—as a stern fact, and an established certainty,—that the war with America would never cease until the Independence of America was acknowledged by the government of Great Britain. In such an acknowledgment Lord Chatham refused to concur. He could not bring himself to speak the irrevocable word which would divide the English people. His position was criticised by Horace Walpole with shrewd and unsparing logic. "He would recall the troops," (said Walpole,) "and deny the Independence of the Americans. He is right to recall an army that cannot conquer; but a country that will not be conquered, and that cannot be, is in an odd sort of state of dependence."<sup>18</sup> It was an inconsistency very natural, and very noble, in an old statesman who was dealing with colonies which he had saved by his genius, where he was still passionately beloved, and where, (as he beautifully expressed it,) his heart was garnered.

On the seventh of April, 1778, the American question was brought forward in the House of Peers by the Duke of Richmond. Chatham insisted on being present at the debate, and, when the Duke ceased speaking, he rose from his seat amidst the anxious sympathy of an awe-stricken assembly. "His Lordship," so the report runs, "began by lamenting that his bodily infirmities had so long, and especially at so important a crisis, prevented his attendance on the duties of Parliament. He declared that he had made an effort, almost beyond the powers of his constitution, to come down to the House on this day, (perhaps the last time he should ever be able to enter its walls,) to express the indignation he felt at an idea, which he understood was gone forth, of yielding up the sovereignty of America." But to narrate once more the story of what then occurred would be like telling over again how Nelson was struck down on the quarter-deck of the *Victory*. Lord Chatham was carried, from the scene of the catastrophe, by easy stages to his home in Kent. There he lay, between life and death, with all his family about him, except the eldest son, whom he affectionately, but

<sup>18</sup> Walpole to the Countess of Ossory; Dec. 5, 1777.

firmly, dismissed from attendance at the bedside to his post of duty on the battlements of Gibraltar.<sup>19</sup> On the eleventh of May Chatham breathed his last. He was saved, by the good fortune of a timely death, from the distress of seeing a war with France conducted in accordance with the methods of Lord George Germaine and the Earl of Sandwich. Nor is he to be compassionated because he was forbidden by fate to embark on the hopeless task of resuscitating the loyalty of America towards the British Crown. "Heaven, (it has been truly, and not unfeelingly, said,) "spared him the anxiety of the attempt, and, we believe, the mortification of a failure."<sup>20</sup>

Edmund Burke, in the finest passage of an admirable speech, had reckoned the name of Chatham as among the solid and valuable possessions of the nation. "A great and celebrated name," (so he called it,) which had kept the name of England respected in every other country of the globe.<sup>21</sup> The citizens of London, in Common Council assembled, expressed an earnest desire that their favourite statesman should be buried "in their Cathedral Church of St. Paul." Rigby translated the known sentiments of the King into his own rude and blustering language, and scoffed at the idea of bestowing a compliment upon the Aldermen of London, whom he vehemently attacked for their degenerated respectability, and their detestable politics. The King himself told his Lord Chamberlain that they might do what they pleased with the corpse, but that he would not let his Guards march in procession into the City. Whatever may have been the motives of the refusal, the decision itself cannot be regretted. The Commons voted Lord Chatham a public funeral, and a monument in Westminster Abbey which, in conception and execution, proved worthy of the man whom it commemorated;<sup>22</sup> and ample, though not excessive, provision was made

<sup>19</sup> A full year elapsed before the new Peer made a hurried visit to England. "The young Earl of Chatham took the oaths and his seat in Parliament on Thursday last. His Lordship was dressed in his regimentals, which were scarlet turned up with green, and he presented a very elegant, manly, and graceful figure. He is as tall as his late father, has the appearance of much mildness in his countenance, and is said to be a most exemplary young gentleman in his morals and general character." *London Evening Post* of Thursday July 17, to Saturday July 19, 1779.

<sup>20</sup> The *Quarterly Review* of June 1840. The article was from the pen of Mr. Croker.

<sup>21</sup> Mr. Burke's speech on American Taxation of April 19, 1774.

<sup>22</sup> A Whig member, who wished to gratify the City, complained that the proposed statue in the Abbey "would be too near the ceiling"; a feature which is the most striking and characteristic merit of the whole design. The tombs of Chatham and of his august coæval Lord Mansfield,—noble monuments, and nobly placed,—go far to redeem the North Transept of the Abbey from presenting the appearance of a statuary's shop.

for the bereaved family. Lord North's personal behaviour, throughout the proceedings, was marked by delicacy, and by genuine good feeling; and the House of Commons honoured itself by the tribute of respect and gratitude which it paid to one who in earlier days had been its own greatest glory.

It was otherwise in the House of Lords. A whole string of insignificant peers, among whom not the least insignificant was Lord Chancellor Bathurst, delivered themselves as if they were so many members of a third-rate debating club assembled to discuss a motion condemning the political conduct of the late Earl of Chatham. They inveighed against him as an arbitrary ruler; as a spendthrift of the public resources; as a plausible and misleading orator; and as a war-minister who owed his reputation to better men than himself. One speaker after another, with suspicious unanimity, reminded their audience that our successes in the Seven Years' War were due, not to Mr. Secretary Pitt, but to Lord Hawke and Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick; and Parliament, (they added,) had not thought fit to treat those distinguished warriors with the liberality which it was now invited to exercise towards the Pitt family. Lord Camden replied, on behalf of his old friend and chief, with intense, but studiously guarded, indignation. He acknowledged that the professional qualifications of Lord Hawke, and of Prince Ferdinand, were beyond question; but the one, (he maintained,) was Lord Chatham's admiral, and the other, his general; "and so far from their individual merits lessening those of the deceased Earl, or diminishing the value of his services, they went directly to enhance both." Lord Chatham was warmly defended by several other Whig noblemen; but the honours of the day rested with a member of His Majesty's Government; for Lord Lyttleton, who with all his faults was a gentleman, argued forcibly and eloquently on the same lines as Lord Camden. There had been many commanders, (he said,) who in past days had led our soldiers and sailors to triumph on land and sea; but England, in the course of her history, had never seen the like of Chatham. At a dark hour in her fortunes he had thrust his way to the front by the mere force of his abilities. He had silenced faction; had restored energy to the administration; and had reduced those national enemies, who at the outbreak of hostilities were assured of success, "to sue with the most abject and mortifying humility for peace." As was most appropriate when dealing with a question involving the expenditure of public money, he gave examples of Chatham's disinterestedness, and of his high-souled scorn for what then were the customary perquisites



of office.<sup>23</sup> Lyttleton's fervour thrilled the assembly, and persuaded most of the ministerialists who had not already committed themselves in debate. After he had resumed his seat cavil was hushed; and the financial proposals, which had been sent up from the Lower House, were carried by a large majority. The Lord Chancellor, and the Archbishop of York, whose own services to the world were remunerated by colossal incomes, put on record a Protest against "an unwarrantable lavishing away of public money during an expensive war." But only two other peers could be induced to sign the document.

The funeral took place on the ninth of June. The great officers of the Court were absent from the ceremony; and Cabinet Ministers remained at home, as if, (said Horace Walpole,) their modesty shrank from a comparison with Lord Chatham. Gibbon, as a supporter of the Ministry, was anything but pleased with his leaders. "The Government," he wrote, "ingeniously contrived to secure the double odium of suffering the thing to be done, and of doing it with an ill grace." Before ever the grave in the Abbey was closed, the work of detraction and calumny recommenced. Thurlow, who succeeded Bathurst as Lord Chancellor within a week of the funeral, had set the tone in Government circles by a sarcasm which was exceptionally brutal, even for him; and aspirants to official preferment launched their gibes against Lord Chatham in epistles written to be shown in high, and in the highest, quarters.<sup>24</sup> The hirelings of the newspaper press continued, all summer through, to slander and ridicule the dead statesman with a pertinacity which, even at this distance of time, provokes contemptuous disgust. Their efforts to belittle him went for less than nothing. Four years back Edmund Burke had analysed the elements of that atmosphere of national respect and regard by which Lord Chatham was surrounded,—“his venerable age, his merited rank, his superior

<sup>23</sup> "The noble Earl," said Lyttleton, "had gone through offices, which generally seemed to enrich his predecessors, without deriving a shilling of advantage from his situation. When he was Paymaster General, a subsidy to the King of Sardinia passed through his hands. The usual perquisite amounted to more than twenty thousand pounds. The noble Earl declined to touch it, and the whole sum was found in the bank years afterwards. It was then offered to the Earl of Chatham as his right. He refused it; and the money was applied to the public service."

<sup>24</sup> Some curious letters in this class have been preserved in the collection of *Steevens's Facsimiles* at the British Museum. Sir Beaumont Hotham, for example, wrote thus to the Right Honourable William Eden. "The 'Chathamania' is very strong upon us. What a wonderful people we are! If Lord Chatham had happened to have lived till Parliament had risen, in all probability this wonderful furor would have subsided long before it met again; and in that case his family would have remained in the same condition as other families descended from expensive and thoughtless ancestors."

eloquence, his splendid qualities, the vast space which he filled in the eye of mankind; and, more than all the rest, his fall from power, which, like death, canonises and sanctifies a great character." And now death itself had come; and the feeling of England about Lord Chatham, from that moment onwards, was a sentiment altogether above and outside party. The strength of that feeling was curiously tested when, after no long interval of time, young William Pitt stepped over the threshold of manhood into the confidence and affection of his fellow-countrymen as naturally and easily as an heir-at-law succeeds to the estate of his predecessor in title. That was the noblest inheritance which ever descended to son from father.

## CHAPTER XIV

### FOX AND THE FRENCH WAR. THE HABITS OF SOCIETY. PERSONAL POPULARITY OF FOX

CHATHAM had passed away, old and very weary; and the times, as he himself confessed, required the services of younger men. His life's work had been ruined by a monarch and a minister who belonged to a later generation than his own; and the deadly peril, which the policy of George the Third and Lord North had brought upon the nation, could only be averted by a political leader in the vigour of life, who possessed the spirit and enterprise of his years. When the news of Saratoga arrived in London, Charles Fox was still but eight-and-twenty. He had begun early. At fourteen he attended the theatre, dressed and powdered in the latest French style. He soon fell romantically in love with the reigning toast of the day; and his sweet and pretty aunt, Lady Sarah Lennox, could discern nothing but what was graceful and becoming in the manifestation of his boyish passion.<sup>1</sup> At sixteen his good sayings,—and very good they were,—were duly reported to George Selwyn, even when they were uttered at Selwyn's own expense; and men of fashion were already glad to win his money, and to take his advice about the cut and colour of their finery, and about the matching of their horses at Newmarket. By the age of five-and-twenty he had despoiled himself of a younger son's landed estate, and a magnificent fortune in money; and he still was a jovial, an ill-ordered, and a very far from irreproachable member of society. But his mind was tending towards nobler interests; and the time gradu-

<sup>1</sup> "Charles is in town, and violently in love with the Duchess of Hamilton. Think of his riding out to see her! You know how he hates it. He is all humbleness and respect, and never leaves her. He is now quite manly, and is very much liked in the world. He is a sweet boy, and I hope will continue as he is." Letter of Dec. 16, 1764, in the *Correspondence of Lady Sarah Lennox*.

ally approached when, in his own peculiar way, he became a reformed character. He ceased to gamble. He lived contented within his slender means. His home-life with the woman whom he loved,—both before and after he married her,—was admired by his uncensorious contemporaries as a model of domestic affection, and mutual sympathy in the insatiable enjoyment of good literature and quiet rural pleasures. Nothing at last remained of the old Charles Fox except the frankness and friendliness, the inexhaustible good-nature, the indescribable charm of manner, and the utter absence of self-importance and self-consciousness, which combined to make him, at every period of his existence, the best fellow in the world.

It is worth while to place side by side, but not in contrast, three separate accounts of Charles Fox at three different and distant epochs of his life. "I have passed," (so George Selwyn wrote in 1774,) "two evenings with him at Almack's; and never was anybody so agreeable, and the more so from his having no pretensions to it." Many years later, when he was near forty, he paid a visit to Gibbon in his pleasant hermitage at Lausanne; and the historian,—who had conversed with most English, and not a few European, celebrities, and who knew all that could be told in books about the best and greatest men of many ages and countries,—declared that no human being was ever more perfectly exempt than Mr. Fox from the taint of malevolence, vanity, and falsehood. Such, in his early youth, and in middle life, Charles Fox showed himself to his elders and his political opponents. How, after the lapse of twenty more years, he was beloved by the younger members of his own family circle, is recorded in Lord Holland's narrative of the great statesman's last illness. "On my approaching my uncle's bedside," (Lord Holland writes,) "he said, with a melancholy smile which I can never forget: 'So you would not leave me, young one, to go to Paris, but liked staying with me better!'" The hour had arrived when on his own account Fox was not unwilling to have done with life; but he could not speak without deep emotion of his wife, or of the public causes which he had nearest at heart. "Do not think me selfish, young one," he said. "The Slave Trade and Peace are such glorious things. I cannot give them up even to you." His last intelligible sentence was, "I die happy." In that placid mood, which was so habitual to him, he left a world the pleasures of which he had keenly relished, and where he had endured, good-humouredly and gallantly, very much more than his fair share of abuse and injustice, of disappointed hopes and baffled labour.



By the time that the American War had run half its course the parliamentary position of Charles Fox was unique in the history of national assemblies. The Lower House was an aristocratic body, including almost every commoner who was prominent in fashionable society, and pervaded by a spirit of easy and unceremonious equality. Fox was familiarly known to all his brother-members, and quite as much at home among them as a clever and popular undergraduate among the students of a great Oxford or Cambridge College. The politicians at Westminster had always heard a great deal about him while he was still at Eton, and had met him in London and at Ascot far more frequently than his schoolmasters ought to have permitted. He was elected for Midhurst at the age of nineteen; he was on his legs before many months had passed; and, when once he knew the sound of his own voice in Parliament, he seldom or never was a silent member for four-and-twenty consecutive hours. In the course of two sessions, according to his own story, he spoke every day but one, and was sorry he had not spoken on that day likewise; and, strange to say, the rest of the House was sorry also. The extraordinary effect which, from the very first, was produced by his masterful rhetoric, is established by the unanimous testimony of impartial, and even hostile, witnesses; but it must be taken on trust, for it is impossible to define, and difficult even to conjecture, the nature of the spell which the wayward and audacious young patrician cast upon his audience. His politics, anti-democratic to excess, were for some years the politics of a boy, and not the best or wisest of boys; but the greatest orators of a great generation envied the skill and force with which he expounded and defended the perverse and absurd opinions which it pleased him to adopt. His speeches were admired by his adversaries of the Opposition more than they were liked by the Government which he supported. The Cabinet was deeply committed to a warfare against the liberty of the Press, and the rights of the Middlesex electors; and Charles Fox was perpetually exhorting Ministers to intensify the rigour of their harsh and unconstitutional policy. However far and fast Lord North and his colleagues travelled along the path of repression, they could not save themselves from being upbraided as lukewarm guardians of authority and order by the young Draco who sat behind them, and sometimes amongst them. Always an object of terror to the leaders of his own party, Charles Fox was never so formidable to them as during those intermittent periods when he condescended to adorn the Treasury Bench as a subordinate member of the Ministry.

The change came, just in time for his own reputation, and for his usefulness as a servant of the public. In the spring of 1774 Charles Fox broke, finally and irreconcilably, with Lord North's government; and, (what was more to the purpose,) he broke with his old self likewise. The deaths of both his parents, and of his elder brother, within the space of half a year,—together with the knowledge of that distress which his unspeakable folly, and unbridled extravagance, had brought upon those whom he loved,—set him thinking soberly and remembering sadly, and produced in him a penitence which was sincere and lasting. He was governed from within by more honourable impulses than had actuated him in the past; and the political associates with whom he now consorted were men whose advice and example he could safely follow. Edmund Burke, and Sir George Savile, were very different mentors from the Right Honourable Richard Rigby, and the Earl of Sandwich. In another respect, moreover, Charles Fox enjoyed a rare advantage, which, (as it is not uncharitable to believe,) was due to his good luck rather than to his foresight and discretion. In his salad days, when he was green in judgment, he had never uttered a word about America,—good, bad, or indifferent,—which remained on record. And therefore when Lord North, throwing open the casket of Pandora, invited Parliament to wreck the prosperity of Boston and extinguish the freedom of Massachusetts, Fox, to the astonishment and amusement of the House of Commons, presented himself in the very unusual attitude of a cold and cautious neutrality. "Without heat," (so Walpole tells us,) "he felt himself at liberty to take what part he should please." The world was not long left in suspense as to what that part would be. During the remainder of the session, the last session of a bad Parliament, Charles Fox was an unflinching opponent of those penal laws which provoked the armed resistance of New England. He spoke seldom,—for him,—but always with effect; he was fertile in embarrassing objections, and in practical amendments which the Government had no choice but to accept; and, above all, he established his claim to be heard amidst the noisiest tumult of an excited house, and at the closing hour of a prolonged discussion. There was that about him which repelled insult. It frequently happened, while those fate-laden measures were being rushed through Parliament, that the protests of Conway and Barré, and even of Burke himself, were interrupted by jeers and drowned in clamour. But, when Fox rose to his feet, he never failed to command universal and willing attention by his impressive vehemence, his persuasive logic, and his unerring tact.

Nor would he consent to resume his seat until the whole row of Ministers had listened to every syllable of that impassioned rush of closely-reasoned sentences in which he conveyed his disapproval of their policy.

The new parliament met in November 1774; and within three years from that date Charles Fox,—with no suspicion of intrigue, or even of conscious intention, on his own part, and without jealousy on the part of others,—had advanced naturally, and by gradual stages, into the undisputed leadership of the Opposition in the Commons. He spoke on every important occasion with increased acceptance, and immense authority. His prophecies had all come true, and the Ministers themselves could not conceal their regret that his warnings had been allowed to pass unheeded. He had reached the summit of his intellectual and physical powers. Henry Grattan, drawing on his long experience of the Irish and English parliaments, pronounced that Fox, during the American War, was the best speaker whom he had ever heard. His method in controversy, then and afterwards, was singularly chivalrous and straight-forward. “He never,” said a careful observer, “misrepresented what his opponent had said, or attacked his accidental oversights, but fairly met and routed him where he thought himself strongest.<sup>2</sup> He wasted no time in preliminary skirmishes, but flung himself upon the key of his adversary’s position, pouring in his arguments as a fighting general hurries up his successive waves of reinforcements in the crisis of a battle. Intent on convincing, he reiterated the substance of his case in fresh forms, and with new illustrations, until the stupidest of his hearers had caught his full meaning; while the cleverest, and the most fastidious, never complained that Charles Fox spoke too long, or repeated himself too often. Always the pre-eminent debater, at this period of his career he was a superb orator. Joseph Galloway, the Pennsylvanian loyalist, who was a frequent attendant in the House of Commons, observed him with the eyes of a bitter and implacable enemy. The person of Fox, (according to Galloway,) was short and squalid; his appearance was mean and disagreeable; his voice inharmonious, and his countenance strongly Judaic. And yet, when it came to the speech itself, this jaundiced critic was all praise and admiration. “Fox is not supposed,” (so Galloway continued,) “to possess a great fund of information; but his mind supplies the deficiency from its own inexhaustible treasure. His delivery is rapid in proportion to the quickness of his conception. The torrent of argument comes rolling from him with irresistible force. He does not leave

<sup>2</sup> *The Character of Charles Fox*, by William Godwin.

his hearers to follow. He drives them before him. The strongest sense is not proof against his power. He sways the whole assembly; and every man communicates the shock to his neighbour.”<sup>3</sup>

Eloquence, if it is to rule the world, must be inspired by strength of conviction, and by continuity of purpose. Charles Fox converted to his own way of thinking two successive parliaments, and extricated his country from the whirlpool of danger in which it was engulfed, not only because he could make wonderful speeches, but because he had a policy, while his opponents had none. The Ministers of the Crown had well-nigh exhausted the national resources in a contest with our own colonies, for the pursuit of ends every one of which, after four years of civil war, they had publicly renounced and abandoned as impossible of attainment. That was the case as concerned the past. A more serious crisis had now arisen; and statesmen in office, to whom the country had a right to look for guidance, stood once again at the parting of the ways, on a lower and more precipitous stage of the descent along the road to ruin. A French war, for which France had long been silently preparing, was already on foot; and a Spanish war was surely coming. There was hardly a government in Europe which did not wish us ill, and intend, if the opportunity offered itself, to do us a mischief. Our Treasury had run dry; the best of our battle-ships, and almost all our regiments, were on the other side of the Atlantic; and America was still unconquered. It was a moment, above all others, when it behoved the rulers of England to look facts honestly in the face. But Lord North and his colleagues, instead of applying themselves with vigilance and resolution to the altered circumstances of their task, went on trifling and dawdling, as they had trifled and dawdled in the past;—irritating America by threats and taunts; cajoling Parliament; manipulating the Press; and attempting to conceal from public knowledge the solitude of their barrack-yards, and the nakedness of their arsenals. Their management of the war was in flat contradiction to the dictates of good sense and sound strategy. They had reduced our Home-fleet to such miserable proportions that, in the summer of 1779, a combined French and Spanish armada paraded unopposed in and about the British Channel for fifteen livelong weeks. They angered the Baltic powers, and the Mediterranean powers by their arbitrary and high-handed treatment of neutral shipping, during a war in which they themselves failed to provide their own national commerce with that

<sup>3</sup> *Considerations on the American Enquiry of the year 1779, by Joseph Galloway, the Speaker of the House of Assembly of Pennsylvania.*



reasonable amount of protection which British merchants had a right to expect from a British Admiralty. At a time when every available soldier was required for the defence of Kent and Sussex, and for service in the East and West Indies, they kept one army idle, or worse than idle, within and around the City of New York, and consumed another army in the series of desultory marches, and bloody engagements, which led up to the catastrophe of Yorktown. They did not even themselves believe in the ultimate success of their own hand-to-mouth policy, and the efficacy of their own half-measures. The Prime Minister, when he spoke the truth in private, confessed that the prolongation of hostilities in America was morally unjustifiable, and foolish to the verge of madness. But, in the words of a precise historian, "his loyalty and personal attachment to the King were stronger than his patriotism. He was cut to the heart by the distress of his sovereign, and he was too good-natured to arrest the war."<sup>4</sup>

Charles Fox was quite as good-natured as Lord North; but that was not the shape which his good-nature took. He did not, in November 1778, conceive it expedient to recognise, openly and immediately, the independence of the United States. His present idea, (so he told Richard Fitzpatrick,) was in favour of withdrawing the whole Royal army from America, abstaining from all aggressive operations against the revolted colonies, and going straight at the throat of France, and of Spain also, if Spain thought fit to thrust herself into the dispute. "Whatever," (he said,) "may be the conditions of alliance between the United States and France, I cannot help thinking that the States will act very lukewarmly against England when they find themselves wholly uninterested in the war, and engaged merely by a point of honour." His industry and his ability were thenceforward directed to a triple purpose. He laboured strenuously to deter the Ministry from wasting the resources of England on ill-advised and fruitless efforts for the subjugation of America; he urged them, by every means in their power, to hurry forward the equipment of our fleets and armies; and he did all that could be done by a private member of Parliament to see that the forces of the Kingdom were employed, with unflagging vigour, and at the right points, against the rapidly increasing multitude of our European foes. His comprehensive glance embraced the entire military and political situation; and he had a marvellous faculty for presenting that situation to the minds of others. In his more important speeches he reviewed the American question, and the French question, at great

<sup>4</sup> Mr. Lecky's *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*; chapter 14.

length, and in all their bearings. Singular as it may appear to men who know the distaste for being lectured which is a permanent characteristic of the House of Commons, those speeches were as attentively heard, and as rapturously applauded, as any orations that have ever been delivered at Westminster. A sense of personal responsibility for the adequate defence of the country was now the governing motive which urged Charles Fox to activity; and his efforts were not confined within the walls of Parliament. He was often at the militia-camps, an intelligent and deeply interested spectator of the manœuvres; and he passed weeks at Portsmouth and at Plymouth, watching the progress of the work in the fitting-basins and the building-yards, and living on ship-board with the admirals and captains, among whom he had some intimate friends, and many acquaintances emulous for the privilege and pleasure of his company. He did very much to further the national preparations for giving the French a warm reception on land and sea; and he threw into the business more heart and spirit than all the Cabinet Ministers together. Never, since the days of Demosthenes and his Olynthiac and Philippic orations, did any public speaker, not endowed with the power and authority of office, exert so commanding an influence over the conduct of a war.

Charles Fox, like other great men who are the natural product of their age, was provided with a theatre expressly suited to the display of his gifts, and the exercise of his capacities. The long period of years during which Pitt, and Murray, and Henry Fox contended for supremacy in Parliament had fixed the standard of debate, and had created a distaste for any speaking that was not unstudied, forcible, perspicuous, and always to the point. Set orations, (said Horace Walpole,) ceased to be in vogue, "which added to the reputation of those great masters." Similes, quotations, and metaphors had fallen into disrepute; allusions to ancient Rome, and ancient Athens, were less liked than formerly; and the style which, by the end of George the Second's reign, had become the fashion, was "plain, manly, and argumentative," and based upon a thorough knowledge of essential facts.<sup>5</sup> It was a fashion which suited Englishmen, who nowhere seemed so completely English as within the walls of their own representative assembly. The aspect of our parliamentary proceedings was surprising to a foreigner. A travelling German clergyman has recorded his impressions of the House of Commons, in the days of Fox and North, with

<sup>5</sup> *Memoires of George the Second*, by Horace Walpole. The spelling of the title is Walpole's own.

the convincing fidelity of a witness who finds the reality of a famous scene something very different from what he has pictured to himself beforehand. The interior of the building, (this gentleman said,) was mean-looking, and reminded him of nothing so much as of the choir of a Lutheran church in Prussia. The members kept on their hats, and wore greatcoats, and even boots and spurs. There was no end to their going in and out, pausing in front of the Speaker, and making him a bow like boys who ask their master's permission to leave the school-room. "Those who speak," (he continued,) "deliver themselves with but little gravity. If a member rises who is a bad speaker, or if what he says is deemed not sufficiently interesting, so much noise is made, and such bursts of laughter are raised, that he can scarcely distinguish his own words. On the contrary, when one, who speaks well and to the purpose, rises, the most perfect silence reigns; and his friends and admirers, one after another, make their approbation known by calling out 'Hear him!'"<sup>6</sup>

An authentic description of the inside of the House of Commons, during the height of the American War, may be read in the speech of a Somersetshire member. He was known from others of his family as Mr. Temple Luttrell; for in those upper-class parliaments a round half-dozen of Luttrells sat for one or another West Country village; and, between them all, they had something under four hundred constituents. Highway Bills, and Enclosure Bills, (according to Mr. Temple Luttrell's account,) generally consumed the time until four o'clock of the afternoon; and the number of members present when public business commenced seldom, or never, amounted to three hundred. On a very great night, if a Congratulatory Address to the Crown, or an augmentation to the Civil List Revenue, was under discussion,—a hundred more would drop in before the division; "and indeed," (said Mr. Luttrell,) "some scores of the majority members thought it sufficient if they repaired from their outposts towards the close of the debate, and made a forced march to the standard of the Minister. Hence it was that, when the Ayes and Noes were finally cast up at eight or nine at night, there was a respectable attendance of near four-fifths of the whole body."<sup>7</sup> As soon as the question was put from the Chair the door was instantly and inexorably shut, and the vote taken. The

<sup>6</sup> *Travels, chiefly on foot, through several parts of England in 1782, by Charles P. Moritz. Translated from the German by a Lady.*

<sup>7</sup> *Debate on Mr. Temple Luttrell's Motion for the admission of Strangers into the Gallery of the House; April 30, 1777.*

three minutes' grace for the benefit of truants and laggards had not then been conceded; and everyone, who desired to place his opinion on record, was obliged to be actually within the walls of the Chamber at the precise moment when the debate ceased. While a division was in prospect every bench was uncomfortably crowded with sitters; and a dense mass of members stood below the bar, and behind the Speaker's Chair, packed like Wilkites in front of the Middlesex hustings. The latecomers were full of wine; and those who had remained on duty through the dinner-hour were impatient for their suppers. It was a terrible audience for an ambitious orator who had not accurately judged his own value; and any gentleman of slow invention and short memory, who rose with a paper of notes in his hand, might count upon being shouted down into his seat before he had come to the end of his first sentence. But even then the House could enjoy a true debate, where argument answered argument, and trenchant hits were capped by telling repartees; especially when Charles Fox wound up the evening with a flood of common-sense, red hot, and fresh from the furnace, which sent his followers forth into the lobby boiling with excitement, and carrying with them not a few of their Parliamentary colleagues upon whose votes the Government whips had hopefully counted.<sup>8</sup>

The influence of Charles Fox inside Parliament owed much to his extreme popularity in that limited and well-defined circle of fashionable society which was almost identical with the sphere of politics. His kingdom was of this world; and a jolly, easy-mannered, world it was.

<sup>8</sup> Mr. Speaker Brand used to maintain that the institution of the three minutes' law before divisions, between the first and second bells, had worked a greater change in the style of House of Commons speaking than any other circumstance whatsoever. Up to that moment, when a matter had been enough discussed, the debate was summarily stopped by the throng of members who were waiting for the question to be put; and a debate it was, and not a succession of speeches, some of which are meant to waste time, while others savour of the study.

The author, during thirty years of Parliament, listened to many fine orations; but there is only one scene which stands out in his memory as a sample of what an encounter between Fox, and Burke, and Wedderburn very probably may have been during the heats of the Middlesex Election. That was the tornado of passion which swept the House of Commons on the seventh of May 1868, when, in consequence of an unexpected incident at a time of intense political excitement, Mr. Bright, Mr. Gladstone, and Mr. Disraeli met in sudden and furious combat. Mr. Disraeli, in particular, spoke as perhaps he had never spoken before, and as most certainly he never spoke afterwards,—with no sparkling epigrams, or fanciful turns, or picked phrases; but with unwonted emphasis and abundance of natural gesture, and amazing vehemence of emotion. The whole affair was over in forty minutes; but it left an indelible impression upon all who witnessed it.



The rural life of the governing class was on a generous scale. Landed proprietors, relatively to the rest of the community, were far richer than at present; and Whig statesmen were not the least affluent among them. We are told that the list of peers who, in the winter of 1778, protested against the prolongation of the American War, was "one of the most respectable that had appeared for some years; as, independent of their great characters in private and public life, there were ten of them whose fortunes made up above two hundred thousand pounds a year."<sup>9</sup> They lived on their paternal estates in homes which they took infinite trouble to enlarge and beautify. All through the middle of the eighteenth century companies of Italian workmen travelled from one end of England to the other, decorating the ceilings and cornices of the great country-houses with those plaster-mouldings which, in the history of domestic ornament, bridge the interval between the work of Grinling Gibbons and the work of the brothers Adam. But the taste for artistic improvement displayed itself most conspicuously in what was around, and not within, the mansion. The strength and prevalence of that taste may be measured by the celebrity of Lancelot Brown, who raised himself from very small beginnings to be the monarch, or rather the despot, of landscape gardening. It was he who, with a very questionable claim upon the gratitude of posterity, extirpated those antique and formal pleasure-grounds which Pope had satirised in his lines on Timon's villa; and it was he who surrounded the most famous country-houses in England with immense masses of forest-trees, with deer-parks and cattle-parks brought within sight of the windows, and with artificial lakes thrown in wherever, in his judgment, nature would have done well to place a sheet of water. His services were so much in request that he refused to exert his talents upon any landed estate of which, (to use his favourite catchword, the origin of his nickname,) he did not recognise "the capabilities"; and he had very decided views of his own upon politics. He disapproved of Lord North's American policy; he regarded the Earl of Chatham as the first of living statesmen; and, if Lancelot Brown's employers thought otherwise, they were careful, in his presence, to keep their opinion to themselves. "This," (so he wrote from Burleigh House,) "is a great place, where I have had twenty-five years' pleasure in restoring the monument of a great minister of a great queen. I wish we had looked at the history of her

<sup>9</sup> *Morning Post* of December 1778.

time before we had begun so unfortunate and disgraceful a war as we have been engaged in.”<sup>10</sup>

Our rural magnates of the eighteenth century made their homes splendid, not as show-places for the admiration of the general public, but for their own personal enjoyment, and the gratification of their intimate friends and social equals. To all who came within that favoured class their hospitality knew no limit in profusion or duration. The select few had the run of all the country-seats which were best worth visiting; they arrived on the day that suited their own convenience; and they stayed as long as they were amused, or until a touch of gout took them. There exists a specimen letter from the Earl of March to George Selwyn, written, on the last day of the year, from a house the name of which is not given. “I have fixed,” he said, “no time for my return. I want to make a visit to the Duke of Grafton, but I like everything here so much that I have no inclination to leave the place. There is an excellent library, a good parson, the best English and French cookery you ever tasted, strong coffee, and half-crown whist. The more I see of the mistress of the house, the more I like her; and our landlord improves on acquaintance. We are now all going to the ice, which is quite like a fair. There is a tent, with strong beer and cold meat, where Lady Spencer, and our other ladies, go an airing. Lord Villiers left us this morning.” That was the sort of company which men like Lord March came all the way from St. James’s Street to consort with; but they looked with infinite disdain upon “the country squires, (God help them!) with their triple-banded and triple-buckled hats; and the clod-pated yeoman’s son in his Sunday clothes, his drab coat, and red waistcoat, tight leather breeches, and light worsted stockings,—calling for porter in preference to ale, because it has the air of a London blade; and depriving of all grace a well-fancied oath from the mint of the metropolis by his vile provincial pronunciation.”<sup>11</sup> The fine ladies, and their admirers, who posted across half England

<sup>10</sup> *Harcourt Papers* for the year 1778. “Capability” Brown, when requested by George the Third to introduce some alterations into the French gardens at Hampton Court, “declined the hopeless task out of respect for himself and his profession.” But he performed wonders at Kew; and Londoners owe to him that Rhododendron Walk which is perhaps the most attractive of all their possessions. The servant made use of his opportunities to speak a word in season to the master, and plainly told His Majesty that he listened too readily to the Earl of Chatham’s enemies. No man, (he said,) was a more loyal subject than his Lordship, or loved England better; and the King, in reply, paid Lord Chatham’s patriotism the somewhat stingy compliment of acknowledging that he had too much good sense to wish harm to his country.

<sup>11</sup> The Reverend Doctor Warner to George Selwyn.

to spend the inside of a month at Euston or Chatsworth, came to meet each other, and not to meet the local gentle-folk. Those who have studied the comedies of Goldsmith and Foote, and the novels of Fanny Burney, do not need to be told how people inside the fashion then regarded people outside of it, and with what careless insolence they permitted their sentiments to colour their behaviour. There were occasions, however, even in the most stately and well-kept mansions, when a fastidious London guest came in for more of rustic company, and rustic politics, than at all pleased him. Once in the month,—or even once a week, when an election was pending,—a wealthy nobleman would keep open house for neighbours of every rank and every calling; because in that generation a vote was a vote, and a peer with twenty thousand acres would have fallen many points in his self-esteem if a couple of politicians of the opposite interest to his own had been returned for the county in which he resided.<sup>12</sup>

The best of the great English land-owners were neither triflers nor dandies. Aristocrats of the right sort, they were fiery, if not very laborious, politicians; well-read gentlemen, for the most part; and sportsmen every inch of them. Those of them who lived within a day's journey from London made a point of entertaining a houseful of political allies and adherents from the first day, to the last, of that parliamentary recess which then covered the whole of January. An honest fox-hunter, who had come all the way from Devonshire or Yorkshire to vote sturdily against Lord North throughout the November session, was amply repaid for his trouble by an invitation to pass the Christmas holidays at Goodwood, accompanied by an assurance that room might be found in the stables for his horses. The Duke of Richmond treated his guests with the heartiness of a soldier, and the courtesy of a perfect host; but he yielded no man precedence in the hunting field,—at all events when Lord John Cavendish was not there to outride him. There were other famous houses where the gamekeeper was a more important personage than the huntsman. Shooting was still a science, which demanded thorough acquaintance with the habits of wild animals, sympathetic knowledge of dogs, and minute familiarity with the features of a countryside. A lord of the manor, were he Earl or Marquis, had to rise early in order to intercept the pheasants on their feeding-grounds before they betook themselves to cover; unless he was

<sup>12</sup> "The house," wrote one of Selwyn's correspondents from beneath Lord Coventry's roof, "is full of tobacco; the yard is full of tenants; and the peer, with an important face, is telling us how much he pays to the Land-tax."

prepared to spend the rest of the day among the brambles and the underwood, with a brace or two of well-broke spaniels hunting close around him.<sup>13</sup> The practice of lazy and wholesale massacre was still in the far future; and it would have been well worth a man's while to hear the language in which Coke of Norfolk would have replied if he had been invited to take part in killing three or four hundred hand-reared ducks and drakes on a single morning. When that typical patrician, after serving fifty-five years in the House of Commons, at last condescended to become the Earl of Leicester, he still went out with his gun on every week-day during the season. At the age of seventy-eight, in the year of the great Reform Bill, he killed twenty-four head of game in twenty-five shots; and that amount of firing was reckoned sufficient for his day's amusement by a nobleman who ranked among the finest sportsmen in the country.<sup>14</sup>

These wealthy and high-born Englishmen had been subjected to a system of instruction not ill adapted to prepare them for a public career. A classical education, whatever may be said against it in theory, is a discipline by which very great men have been successfully trained for the conduct of great affairs. There have been eminent statesmen who brought nothing to their life's work except an intense and glowing mind, a clear insight into the circumstances of the contemporary world amidst which they moved, and a passionate admiration for the masterpieces of ancient literature. That, and little else, constituted the intellectual outfit of Lord Chatham, and of his famous son, when they first entered upon the scene of their labours. A youth of promise, with a turn for elocution, learned from old Greek and Roman examples how to express his ideas in an elevated, a lucid, and a manly style; and he might learn from the same source more important lessons still. Lord Camden, (as his biographer remarks,) owed an inestimable debt to Eton. Not only was his taste refined by the exquisite, if not very profound, scholarship which was a special feature of the place, "but from his Livy, and from a stealthy perusal of Claudian, he imbibed

<sup>13</sup> The passage on pheasant-shooting in Colonel Hawker's *Instructions to Young Sportsmen* shows that the conditions of the sport did not alter during the next half-century; for Colonel Hawker had been wounded at Talavera long before he wrote his admirable and authoritative book.

<sup>14</sup> Ten years later on, the Earl of Leicester was too old to range the stubbles, and his sons maintained the credit of the establishment. "At Holkham," (so Lord Melbourne told Queen Victoria,) "they shoot from morning to night; and, if you do not shoot, you are like a fish upon dry land." Lord Melbourne was then not long past sixty; but the heroic age of the great Whig sportsmen was already on the wane.



that abhorrence of arbitrary power which animated him through life.”<sup>15</sup> It was the same at Harrow, under the influence of Samuel Parr, the most efficient, and, (it must be admitted,) the most pompous and self-opinionated of all assistant-masters. One of his pupils, himself a man of some distinction, relates how the eloquent tutor inculcated and enforced “the love of freedom, and the hatred of tyranny, which breathed in the orators, poets, and historians of Greece and Rome.”<sup>16</sup> The lively young Whigs, who swarmed on that classic hill, had soon an opportunity of testifying their attachment to those generous doctrines in a practical form. The Head-master died; and the Governing body chose his successor from Eton. Parr, who applied for the post, was passed over,—according to his own account, because he had voted for Wilkes at Brentford;—and the Harrow boys, among whom both Parr and Wilkes were favourites, manifested their indignation by mobbing the Governors, and wrecking the carriage which had brought them down from London. Parr resigned his mastership, and set up a rival educational establishment in the neighbouring village of Stanmore. He attracted away with him from Harrow a large number of his former pupils, who are described, in stately diction, as “the flower of the school in the zenith of its glory.”

There were few men of rank and opulence who did not entertain,—or, at the very least, affect,—a keen interest in the literature and art of their own generation. They were intelligent critics, and munificent patrons after a fashion which encouraged merit, without breeding servility. They kept their book-shelves, all our island over, as well supplied as their cellars and their ice-houses; and they never hesitated about paying down their two guineas, or three guineas, for a bulky quarto fresh from the printing-presses of Millar, or Strahan, or Dodsley. They freely purchased the *Fermier Général* editions of the French classics; and those Italian engravers who dedicated their ponderous and superb volumes, in terms of fulsome panegyric, to Roman Princes and Cardinals, found their most numerous, and certainly their most solvent, customers among British Peers and squires.<sup>17</sup> For a student,

<sup>15</sup> *Lord Campbell's Lives of the Chancellors*; chapter 142.

<sup>16</sup> *Memoirs of Thomas Maurice*, the Oriental scholar and historian.

<sup>17</sup> In 1764 Robert Adam, the King's architect, brought out his great book on Diocletian's palace at Spalatro in Dalmatia. The London subscription-list, for six hundred copies of that costly work, included almost every territorial potentate, and every man in a public position whose name is now remembered. Lord Shelburne applied for five sets; Sir Thomas Robinson, the ex-Secretary of State, for six; and Lord Bute,—a Scotchman opening his purse-strings to a brother Scotchman,—for no less than ten. The whole

whose estimate of beauty and charm in books is not regulated by the conventional values of the auction-room, there is no inheritance more desirable than a library collected by ancestors who read and travelled during the middle portion of the eighteenth century. The culture that permeated society was faithfully reflected in its conversation, which was brilliant perhaps as never before or since, and singularly exempt both from pedantry and triviality. Gibbon, writing at ten o'clock on a Saturday night, relates how he had just seen off from his door Burke, Garrick, Sheridan, Charles Fox, Lord Camden, Lord Ossory, and Topham Beauclerk. That was a London supper-party of the year 1778. Beauclerk, of all who sat round the table, was in his own days the least known to fame; and yet Beauclerk left behind him a library of thirty thousand volumes, and possessed talents which Doctor Johnson confessed himself disposed to envy.

Our progenitors lacked the mechanical appliances, and many of the imported luxuries, which are now regarded as indispensable; but what they had was good, and they never pretended to be above enjoying it. Their habits were different from ours, and very different from those which prevailed among people of their own class on the Continent of Europe. A French gentleman,—who, after spending six weeks in our island, without understanding our language, published an exhaustive work on our character and manners,—regarded Londoners as the most incomprehensible ascetics. Till late in the day, (he said,) they took nothing but tea, and two or three slices of bread and butter, so thin as to do honour to the dexterity of the person who cut them. Such was the mode of life in an English household a hundred and forty years ago, and it continued to be the same in mercantile and professional families throughout the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Breakfast was of the lightest; and those who required luncheon were mostly content with bread and butter again. A certain country-house in the East of England still sends out to the shooting-field the historical noon-tide meal of bread and cheese, and a bag of onions, which satisfied the vigorous appetites of Coke of Norfolk, and Charles James Fox. But the period of abstinence ended when the day's work finished; and it finished early. There were hearty dinners at four o'clock in the country, and pleasant dinners lasting from five till

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continent of Europe together took six-and-twenty copies. When, a few years later, Volpato gave to the world his reproductions of Raphael's Arabesques in the Loggia of the Vatican in a magnificent tome forty-two inches high, most of the copies, before very long, had made their way from Rome into British country-houses.

eight in town, with a good supper to follow. Elderly people, in the year 1778,—as had been the case in almost every successive generation since the Norman conquest,—grumbled about the growing lateness of the dinner-hour. Horace Walpole complained bitterly that his afternoon callers would not go home to dress for the evening until four o'clock had struck; and, when he was in a particularly bad humour over the American policy of the Government, he asserted dolefully that the glory of Britain had departed, that everything in public and private life was altered for the worse, and that he could not even get his dinner before nearly six at night.<sup>18</sup>

The culinary art, as then practised in England, owed little to exotic teaching and example. Here and there might be found a nobleman who paid his French *chef* a salary of ninety guineas a year; but the made-dishes of native origin were very few in number; and, in this country of ancient and continuous tradition, it is still possible to ascertain how detestably they must have tasted.<sup>19</sup> The merit of a London or provincial dinner depended not so much upon the cunning of the cook as upon the intrinsic excellence of the viands; and there is little doubt that the immense and undisputed reputation of turtle and venison has been handed down from the days when epicures looked to substance rather than to style. Our ancestors had plenty of turbot and john-dories, when they lived near the coast, and, (if they chose to break the law,) they could buy game anywhere; but they counted among their luxuries some articles of food which are very seldom placed on a modern table.<sup>20</sup> George Selwyn's favourite parson, when located many miles away from Billingsgate market, was contented

<sup>18</sup> Gibbon to Holroyd; March 5, 1777. Walpole to Mann; Arlington Street, December 18, 1778; and February 6, 1777.

According to Bishop Watson of Llandaff the dinner-time at Cambridge was three o'clock. When the bishop was a Trinity sizar in 1754 every college dined at twelve, and he never grew reconciled to the change of hour.

<sup>19</sup> In cookery-books of that date the usual side-dishes are collared eels and mutton-pies, repeated twice,—or, at a great banquet, even four times,—at opposite angles of the same table. Collared eels may still be eaten at Sunday breakfasts in Trinity College, Cambridge; and mutton-pies, made after the receipt of 1764, were, within the author's memory, served as an entrée at Johnson's Club on an evening when a new member was initiated. Two of them would have made a dinner even for Doctor Johnson himself.

<sup>20</sup> One of Edmund Burke's visitors wrote down the bill of fare on a day when there was a houseful at Beaconsfield.

"First Course: a boiled turkey, roast beef, soup, calves-head, cow-heel.  
Second Course: Woodcock, Hare, tarts, asparagus."

It could be wished that a guest at the Tusculan villa had left as precise an account of the dinner which Marcus Tullius Cicero gave his friends in the country.

with perch "plain boiled, or in a water-zoochey," and a fine jack with a pudding inside of it. Another of Selwyn's correspondents announced the return to town of a gentleman who had repaired from St. James's Street to the purer air of Brighthelmstone in quest of an appetite. "Fanshawe," he wrote, "set out this morning. He will arrive in London the very quintessence of wheat-ears; for he has eat nothing else for this week past, and it is feared that he has destroyed the species." Pike, and perch, and wheat-ears would now be archaic items on a bill of fare; but there is still a cheerful ring about the form of words which in the eighteenth century was proverbial of intimate rural hospitality, when one old friend invited another to come down to his manor-house or rectory to help him "eat a trout." Whether the food was good, or less good, the board was crowned with the very best of liquor. The young and the imprudent drank Burgundy, while more cautious diners were at great pains to procure the choicest vintages from Bordeaux. People who were at a distance from their wine-merchant would trust no one short of George Selwyn, if they had a claim upon his good offices. "Get me the best Chambertin you can," wrote the Earl of March; "and you may give any price for it." And Mr. Anthony Storer,—a not less important, and far more respectable, member of fashionable society than Lord March,—told Selwyn that, as long as he could pay his way, he would have his *Vin de Grave*, such as Madame de Sévigné used to drink, although it cost him four shillings a bottle.

That was the social atmosphere in which Charles Fox moved, with an energy of motion that kept everything alive around him. He carried to excess all the tastes which were in vogue among his contemporaries, and he had mastered all the attainments and accomplishments upon which they prided themselves. Fox was a scholar in that sense of the word which gives scholarship its true value. His Eton compositions, in Latin verse and prose, were something better than an ingenuity, but lifeless, mosaic of antique phrases. Slight, graceful, and spontaneous,—and of an amatory cast whenever the subject admitted of it,—they might have been written in the days of Augustus by a young Roman of quality, who had spent his time over Propertius and Tibullus when he ought to have been reading his Stoic philosophers. As the years went on, Fox became more and more imbued with a passion for the classics, not of Greece and Rome only. No famous Englishman ever lived who had a more ardent and disinterested love



of books. Fox acquired some command over every language which then could boast a literature. Spanish he knew well, and Portuguese imperfectly. He read Italian as easily as French; and he could talk French, and write it, as rapidly and as intelligibly, although not so elegantly, as English. At a later period of his life the poetry and history of the past occupied and absorbed his mind almost to the extinction of personal ambition; and, even during the bustle of the American controversy, he contrived to get through an enormous amount of reading in that bed which he sought unwilling towards daybreak, and left with all but insuperable reluctance at two in the afternoon. He already had a good selection of books, of which some were scarce and valuable; and George Selwyn wondered why "he did not keep them at Brooks's, where they would have been unmolested." But such a precaution was altogether foreign to the nature of Charles Fox. He had gone security for one of those friends who had often gone security for him; and the contents of his house were seized in execution by a creditor. The removal of his goods was the sight of the day in St. James's Street; and their sale was an event of the London season. General amusement was excited by the shabby condition of his furniture; and the pages of his books were examined with curiosity for the sake of the notes which were pencilled on the margin. Such, (said Horace Walpole,) was the avidity of the world "for the smallest production of so wonderful a genius." Charles Fox came off on this occasion better than he merited. Half Brooks's was there to watch over his interests; and the Earl of March, (who otherwise in all probability would have been worse employed,) spent the whole of the day in the auction-room buying in the best of the books with the object of restoring them to their owner. Fox meanwhile, by a strange whim of fortune, for the first time in his life had a continuous run of luck at cards, and kept the money. He re-furnished his house within a fortnight; and, to the unutterable surprise of all who knew him, he had it cleaned and painted. He relieved the anxiety of Lord Carlisle by paying off the obligations which that devoted friend had incurred on his behalf; and he could thenceforward annotate his favourite volumes in full confidence that they never again would come to the hammer.

Charles Fox paid a heavy penalty for his early greatness. He is habitually cited as the instance of a statesman who was a confirmed gamester; and yet he ceased to be a gamester at an age when very few indeed, besides himself, have taken rank as statesmen. While still a stripling he was diced and wagered,—and, as his elders believed, was

glaringly and transparently cheated,—out of an immense fortune. For some years afterwards he continued to play high; but in the spring of 1782, at the period of life when an aspiring member of Parliament begins to hope for an appointment as a Junior Lord of the Treasury, Fox became the leading Minister of the Crown in power and influence, although not in title. Thenceforward he gambled less and less frequently, until, after no very long while, he dropped the practice altogether. Prudence and self-respect made him mend his ways; and he had counter-attractions, congenial to his better nature, which gradually inspired him with a distaste for the most sordid and irrational of all pastimes. The drawing-room at White's or Almack's, after the hazard-table had been lighted up, was no paradise for men of sense and intellect. "Alas! alas!" said Lord Carlisle. "We do nothing but drink gin-negus, and two or three other febrifuges, all the time. And, then, looking at the candle for nine hours together is so good for the eyes!" Fox no longer cared to fritter away his evenings on such dreary and debasing pursuits when Dante and Boccaccio were awaiting him at home, or when Johnson and Burke were talking across the empty chair reserved for him at the dinner-table of the Literary Club. His familiar associates, moreover, were great peers and commoners who had long ago grown ashamed of trying to win money, which they did not want, from people less wealthy than themselves. Richmond, and Savile, and Rockingham played whist for small sums of silver, when they played at all; and Coke of Norfolk had sworn off from gambling before he came to full manhood, and kept his oath ever afterwards. Other converts, who had weaker wills than Thomas Coke, fortified their good intentions by a device singularly characteristic of the world in which they lived. When a member of Brooks's judged that the time had come for him to set up as a serious-minded politician, he not unfrequently called in the aid of a bet to assist him in keeping his virtuous resolutions. "Lord Northington," (so it stands recorded,) "has given Lord George Cavendish ten guineas, to receive twelve hundred if Lord George Cavendish loses on one night one thousand guineas, from Dinner to Dinner, at Hazard before the tenth of May next."<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> George Selwyn was under a running engagement to pay Lord Carlisle twenty guineas, for every ten guineas, above fifty, which he himself lost, on any one day, at any game of chance. The forfeits were all to go for the benefit of the little Howards. "I reserved fifty," said Selwyn, "for an unexpected necessity of playing, in the country or elsewhere, with women;" for the ladies were too often insistent gamblers, inexorable creditors, and evasive losers. This peculiar form of moral insurance was applied to other

Fox took part in all bodily exercises, which then were popular, with an enthusiasm very flattering to those who made proficiency in such exercises the principal study of their lives. He played well at cricket, and very well at tennis; and he was devoted to the gun, although he possessed no manor of his own to sport over. His share of the paternal acres had long ere this gone the same road as all else which he inherited.<sup>22</sup> But the owners of shooting were always ready to place it at the disposal of Fox. When inclination prompted, and the weather served, he did not wait to be invited; and, asked or unasked, he was welcomed everywhere. How he got about the country, with so notoriously deficient a store of ready money, was a source of wonder to George Selwyn, who was forever minding the business of other people, and more especially the business of Charles Fox. But Fox had a way with innkeepers, as with all his fellow-creatures, and he never failed to command post-horses from the commencement, to the close, of the shooting season. He travelled into Derbyshire, to kill grouse at Chatsworth,—a brace or two in the day, where they are now killed by scores,—and where he carefully recorded the exact weight of the finest bird which his bag contained. He made rapid excursions from London into one or another of the home-counties whenever a hard frost gave hope of woodcock; and he spent his Septembers among the partridges in Norfolk, which,—in the days of Walpoles, and Townshends, and Cokes, and Keppels,—was more thickly studded with Whig houses than any other district in England. Fox shot better as he grew older and cooler; but, before he had turned five-and-thirty, he was often too excited to do himself justice when game was afoot. He took an unselfish pride in the marvellous performances of his brother-sportsman, Thomas Coke; and Coke repaid him by the trouble that he expended in providing horses sufficiently powerful to carry his illustrious friend about the country. Fox had overcome his boyish dislike of the saddle; although riding was to him almost as great an exertion as walking, or even running, to a man of ordinary bulk. He might be seen on the course at Newmarket, waiting opposite the spot where his jockey had been ordered to make the final effort; and from

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temptations than those of the gaming-board. One man of high position received five guineas from a friend, in return for a promise to pay a thousand if ever he went to a certain house, in a certain street, known to both parties.

<sup>22</sup> On an occasion when Charles Fox encountered in debate his fiery young kinsman from Somersetshire a nobleman, who knew them both, observed that it was a drawn battle between Acland and Lackland.

that point onward he galloped in with the horses, "whipping, spurring, and blowing, as if he would have infused his whole soul into his favourite racer." He worked at the abstruse problems of weights, and distances, and public running, and private trials, as hard as he worked at everything except the conscious preparation of his speeches; and he was very generally regarded as the most expert and trustworthy handicapper in the South of the island. Fox enjoyed existence thoroughly; and he was willing that all other people should enjoy it likewise, according to their opportunities, and their own notions of what constituted pleasure. He refused to discountenance bull-baiting. The outcry against the inhumanity of the common people was, (he said,) unjust, as long as their betters fished and hunted; and he was "decidedly in favour of boxing." In the course of his life he must have seen more than enough of it as he looked down upon the crowd from the Westminster hustings.<sup>23</sup>

When Fox was in London he established his headquarters at Brooks's, which was within a few doors of his house. There he was

<sup>23</sup> The Fox papers include several confidential letters on racing topics. The following document is a workmanlike production; and, (so far as a non-racing man can judge,) it contains nothing incompatible with the spirit of a genuine sportsman. It is docketed as of the year 1779. Fox very seldom dated his earlier letters to Fitzpatrick, and generally omitted to append his signature.

"Newmarket, Wednesday night.

"Dear Dick,

The horses came in in the following order. The race was on the Flat.

	stone		lb.
Rosemary	8	—	2
Diadem	8	—	2
Rodney	8	—	12
Trotter	7	—	2
Fumus (?)	8	—	2

It was a very near race among the four first; and your horse was beat a great way, and very easily. I am rather inclined to think the race a very true one; and, if it is, your horse must be what I always believed him,—a very bad one. If you should happen to meet the Duke of Queensberry in a matching humour, and you should find him willing to run Drowsy against Rosemary, provided it is not less than a mile, I think you cannot make a bad match; though, if it could be across the Flat, I should like it better. I do not think there is much chance of making a match; but, if you can, pray do. Diadem and Rosemary are both disengaged the latter end of the First Meeting; and, as to Rodney, I know he is afraid of him.

Yours affly.

Both Rodney and Trotter seemed to run faster than the mare, though she won at last. Foley thinks Trotter as likely a horse to match to advantage as either of the others. You must set him down in your mind to be a stone worse than Rosemary for a mile, and 18 lbs. worse across the Flat."



much more comfortable than under his own roof; and there he was in the bosom of his family. For the club was his castle, garrisoned by a staunch body-guard of friends, in the midst of whom he was safe from duns, and bores, and Ministerial supporters,—except those of them who, like Gibbon and George Selwyn, were so fond of his company that they could tolerate, without a protest, the unreserved outpouring of his political opinions. No party test as yet barred the portals of Brooks's against a professed Tory; but admission to the club was guarded by a rigorous standard of social exclusiveness; and it so happened that those candidates, who were most acceptable for social reasons, very generally belonged to the Opposition. The mark of a fashionable Whig, (in the words of Horace Walpole,) was to live at Brooks's, "where politics were sown, and in the House of Commons, where the crop came up;" and at Brooks's Fox might usually be found,—when he was not at St. Stephen's, or between the blankets,—marching to and fro, like other famous talkers in the flower of their youth, and expounding to a sympathetic audience his estimate of Lord North and Lord George Germaine, and his anticipations about the next stand-and-fall division in the House of Commons. The club owns an admirable water-colour by Rowlandson, showing the great drawing-room, adorned by a ceiling and chimney-piece in the Adams style, with pairs of veterans intent on their games of *écarté* in each corner, and the vast circular table surrounded by a multitude of players, with a tank full of gold in the centre. In the foreground of the picture Charles Fox,—two or three years older, and somewhat fatter, and even less aesthetically dressed, than during the American War,—is holding forth to the unconcealed delight of his hearers.

The drawing-room is still the same as ever; and the round table remains, innocent of dice and cards. The club-house has been doubled in area, and brought up to a modern level of sanitation; but those who remember the Brooks's of five-and-forty years ago can form for themselves a very lifelike notion of the eighteenth century. Solid and unpretentious luxury, of an antique type, ruled within its walls. A dinner, the absolute perfection of English cookery, was served by a numerous band of attendants, respectful and confidential after the manner of the good old school, in that full evening costume, with knee-breeches and black silk stockings, which is now worn only in kings' palaces. There was no recourse to scientific methods of illumination, but each little table was lighted with two portly wax candles. Before the disruption of the party in the summer of 1886 there were

nights when a member, who came up from the House of Commons or the House of Lords, bringing the latest news with him, might see none but friends, or intimate acquaintances, around him. The talk went across the room, from table to table, as freely as in the days of Fox; and the place was full of his associations. Three or four times every year a party of sound politicians, a club within a club, honouring him in a fashion which would have met his hearty approbation, dined together very sumptuously, and drank "The memory of Mr. Fox, in solemn silence." It was currently, but perhaps not very authoritatively, believed in Brooks's that the annual subscription had been increased from ten to eleven guineas in order to pay off some of his debts; and any proposal to build bath-rooms and dressing-rooms died away in presence of the tacit, but instinctive, sentiment that those facilities for washing which had satisfied the unexacting requirements of Mr. Fox were good enough for the best of his successors.

Frederic the Great once expressed his surprise when he was informed by a tourist, who was on a visit to Potsdam, that Englishmen might sit in Parliament at one-and-twenty. The King remarked that Peers and Commoners in Great Britain evidently acquired the talent for legislation much sooner than a Patrician of ancient Rome, who might not enter the Senate before forty;<sup>24</sup> and, no doubt, if these young gentlemen had been his own subjects, he would have sent them to employments which, in his view, were much better suited to their years. The House of Commons in the eighteenth century swarmed with eldest sons; with cousins and nephews of great noblemen who were patrons of family boroughs; and with wealthy squires, who scorned a peerage, but made it a point of honour to stand for their own county at the first general election after they came of age. Charles Fox, at nine-and-twenty, was already a Parliamentarian of ten years' service; and he exercised unbounded authority over the gilded youth who supplied so large a contingent to the ranks of the Opposition. His immediate contemporaries had always believed in his future at a time when the rest of the world, with much excuse, thought him a trifler and a ne'er-do-well. As early as 1774 George Selwyn complained that there were people at Almack's who cherished a fanatical belief in the necessity of Charles Fox being the first man in the country, both for his own sake, and for the well-being of the nation. And now, in 1778, if Fox was not the first man in England, at all events there

<sup>24</sup> The age at which a Roman citizen could enter the Senate was more probably about thirty. But King Frederic was sadly to seek in his knowledge of the classics.

was no one, from King George downwards, who did not either fear him, or follow him.

The host of young Whig members at last found a leader, and, (which they had not counted upon,) a drillmaster. They had enjoyed easy times in the past. Rockingham, and Savile, and Lord John Cavendish, excellent and immaculate as they were, loved their own leisure too well to feel themselves justified in reproving the laziness of others; and Edmund Burke who, with solitary and undaunted perseverance, had spared no exertions to indoctrinate the Whig party with a sense of their public obligations, had little influence on the daily conduct of his younger parliamentary colleagues. He was above them, but not of them. They looked upon him as a superior kind of schoolmaster, whose notions of duty were too severe, and whose lectures were a great deal too long; and they kept out of his way as sedulously and respectfully as, not many years before, they had kept out of the way of their Eton tutor. But there was no escaping the eye of Charles Fox. The most ubiquitous of mortals, he was with them in their goings out and comings in,—in the card-room of the club, in the gun-room of the country-house, at Ranelagh and Vauxhall, at Epsom, at Ascot, at Newmarket, and even so far north as Doncaster. He talked politics as irrepressibly, as persuasively, and in as curious and inappropriate places, as Socrates talked ethics. His comments on the Cabinet Ministers were infinitely diverting, his forecast of the course of State affairs was cheerful and sanguine, and he was always ready to back his prophecies by a wager. But, despite his joviality, and his sympathy with every form of human enjoyment, he had within him the essential qualities of a disciplinarian. His adherents and supporters might amuse themselves wherever they pleased between-whiles, as long as they answered his call whenever the summons to action came; and they, on their part, yielded him the implicit and unquestioning obedience which youth pays to youth, in a case where a right to command has been recognised and conceded. He could not be eluded, or hoodwinked; for he had been one of themselves. He was acquainted with all their haunts and hiding-places; he fathomed the hollowness of their excuses when a critical division was impending; and he let them know his mind, in language which went home to theirs, if on any such occasion he missed their faces in the Lobby. His familiar correspondence,—and the familiarity of Charles Fox embraced a wide circle of people,—was largely made up of rebukes to the delinquent, and reminders to the forgetful. A fair example may be found in a

letter written during the closing months of the American controversy. "I never," (so Fox told a friend in February, 1782,) "was more sorry to hear you were out of town. Monday is likely to be of as much consequence, towards deciding the fate of these people, as any day this year. If you can possibly come, pray do; for it is really childish, when attendance is of such real importance, to give it up for mere idleness." Charles Fox might admonish others with a clear conscience because he himself took public life very seriously. He had been educated in the tenets of a loose and vicious creed, the creed of old Holland House, by a father who was at once the most fascinating and corrupting of preceptors. But his superb mental constitution at length threw off that deadly poison; and he thought out for himself a just, a lofty, and, (for his generation,) a most original conception of the statesman's duty. Fox was drenched with calumny when alive; and it has been the fashion ever since, among writers of a certain school, to ignore the priceless services which he rendered to liberty and humanity, and to judge him solely by their own interpretation of his attitude with regard to the foreign policy of Great Britain. But his detractors, then or now, have never been able to call in question his highest title to honour. No man has denied, and no man ever can deny, that, during all the best years of his life, Charles Fox sacrificed opportunities of power and advancement, emoluments which he sorely needed, and popularity which he keenly relished, for the sake of causes and principles incomparably dearer to him than his own interest and advantage.

The change in his moral nature was silent and unostentatious; but, by the year 1778, some acute and friendly observers began to be aware what sort of man he had now become. Burgoyne's disaster, and the certainty of a breach with France, spread a panic through official circles. Lord North used the utmost diligence to attract to himself political support from outside his Government; and he was prepared to bid very high indeed for a young man who was already the favourite of the House of Commons. "Charles," (so George Selwyn was informed,) "eats, and drinks, and, though he never loses sight of the Treasury, confesses it is rather a distant prospect at present. A great part of the Opposition have had offers of coming in, but not on terms that they like; and I do think it does Charles great credit that, under all his distresses, he never thinks of accepting a place on terms that are in the least degree disreputable. I assure you, upon my honour, that he has had very flattering offers made him more than once of late, and



he has never for a moment hesitated about rejecting them.”<sup>25</sup> Fox explained the motives which guided him at this conjuncture in a letter to Captain Richard Fitzpatrick, who then was serving with the British army in Philadelphia; and his explanation is deserving of all credence, because those two young men had always been in the habit of writing to each other the plain unvarnished truth, even when that truth did not look well on paper. Fox now told Fitzpatrick that, according to general expectation, the Ministry would be driven to resign, but that he himself was firmly persuaded to the contrary. “People flatter me,” (so he proceeded, with much underscoring of his manuscript,) “that I continue to gain, rather than lose, my credit as an orator; and *I am so convinced that this is all that I shall ever gain, (unless I become the meanest of men,) that I never think of any other object of ambition. Great situation I never can acquire,—nor, if acquired, keep,—without making sacrifices that I will never make.*”<sup>26</sup> Those were the convictions which inspired alike his House of Commons speaking, and his private talk; and not a few members of Parliament, who had hitherto regarded politics as a trade or a pastime, were brought to a consciousness of their public responsibilities by the force of his exhortations, and the influence of his example.

Fox was popular with women, and stood high in the good graces of the best among them for reasons very honourable to himself, and to his admirers. He was no lady-killer, and only too little of a fop. The young Oxonian of nineteen, who had made himself talked about by travelling post from Paris to Lyons in order to select patterns for his fancy waistcoats, had already sobered down into the most plainly and carelessly dressed man, of his own age and eminence, in London. He was not in, but above, the fashion; and the world,—overstocked, as it always has been, with dandies and coxcombs,—liked Charles Fox all the better for his inattention to outward appearance. He possessed, in a remarkable degree, the rarest of social gifts, the power of being himself in every company. Familiar, kindly, and expansive with high and low,—with the brilliant and the dull, the virtuous and the faulty, alike,—he united all suffrages; and his most loyal well-wishers were certain great ladies who had been satiated with flattery, and who knew no pleasure like that of being treated as intellectual equals, and trusty comrades, by one whose esteem and confidence were so well worth

<sup>25</sup> James Hare to George Selwyn; June 1778.

<sup>26</sup> Fox to Fitzpatrick; February 1778.

having. They were no fair-weather friends. In the very darkest period of his fortunes,—when English politics were dominated by an overwhelming reaction against the ideas of progress and the national traditions of liberty,—whoever else deserted Fox, those brave women remained loyal to him, and to the principles which he had taught them. It was then that the Duchess of Devonshire expressed herself with a noble frankness to no less formidable a correspondent than Philip Francis, who had referred to the regard felt by the Duchess for Charles Fox in some sentences which, if style is any guide, most assuredly came from the pen of Junius. “The generous passions,” (so he told her,) “are always eloquent, especially on a favourite subject. You love him with all his faults, because they are *his*. I wish I was one of them. I should keep good company, and share in your regard.” Her reply ran as follows. “As I am very sure you do not think that I, as a woman, ever was, could be, or am, in love with Charles Fox, you will allow that in fervour, enthusiasm, and devotion I am a good friend.... Would I were a man to unite my talents, my hopes, my fortune, with Charles’s; to make common cause, and fall or rule with him!” That tribute to an unbroken intimacy of very long duration was paid in the year 1798, when the writer thought fit to call herself an old woman; but in the autumn and winter of 1777 the Duchess of Devonshire, and the Countess of Ossory, and Mrs. Crewe of Crewe Hall were all young together, and all sincerely attached to Fox. It was an example which others of their sex found it easy and agreeable to follow; for women could not meet Charles Fox without liking him. They became his sworn partisans. They canvassed for him at elections. They smuggled themselves under the gallery of the House of Commons on an afternoon when he was expected to speak his best. They studied political questions, although some of them had to begin with the rudiments;<sup>27</sup> and they took care that their husbands and brothers, if they called themselves Whigs, should give orthodox Whig votes. Throughout the whole of the struggle which convulsed Parliament, and London society, during the coming fifty months it was no slight benefit to Charles Fox that he had the women on his side.

*There follows a savage indictment of the administration of the navy under the profligate Earl of Sandwich, of its inept showing in home*

<sup>27</sup> “Lady Melbourne,” said Horace Walpole, “was standing before the fire, and adjusting her feathers. Says she: ‘Lord! They say the Stocks will blow up. That will be very comical.’”

*waters, and of its humiliating conduct during the attempted invasion of England in the summer of 1779 that followed upon Spain's entry into the war in alliance with France. That England, so utterly unprepared for invasion, should have managed to stand off her ancient enemies was due far more to faulty cooperation between the allied fleets, Channel storms, and a smallpox epidemic that ravaged the French ships, rather than to any heroic deeds of Sir Charles Hardy, whose command of the Channel Fleet on this occasion will always be a subject of controversy.*

## CHAPTER XV

### BURKE AND THE INDIANS. THE POWER OF THE CROWN. BURKE AND BRISTOL

THROUGHOUT the years which elapsed between 1775 and 1782 war raged all the world over, and military reputations were made, and unmade, with startling rapidity. And yet, as far as England was concerned, the most distinguished names which have come down to us from that stirring time are those of civilians, and not of soldiers; for, in the full sense of the phrase, the toga was then more powerful than the sword. In the course of our long parliamentary history the two great parties in the House of Commons have not unfrequently been led by rival statesmen each of whom was an orator of the first order; but, except during the period which coincided with the American Revolution, such a pair of champions as Burke and Fox have seldom indeed fought side by side in the same ranks. They were closely, and, (as it then seemed,) indissolubly united by devotion to a common cause, and by mutual confidence and affection. Fox, devoid of self-conceit, and incapable of envy, regarded Burke with

“That instant reverence,  
Dearer to true young hearts than their own praise;”

and the older man took unceasing delight in the company of the younger, and submitted himself willingly and unreservedly to the spell of the extraordinary charm which he, like everybody else, found it impossible to define and analyse.

Very early in the time when they began to work in concert Burke paid Fox the unusual tribute of accepting him as the exponent of his own views on more than one occasion;<sup>1</sup> and the influence of the two

<sup>1</sup> After the discussion on the Address in November 1776 Burke wrote to his friend Champion to explain his own silence. “I never,” (he said,) “knew Charles Fox better,



allies on the proceedings in Parliament was all the more effective because the one was the precise complement of the other. "You always," said Wordsworth, "went from Fox with your feelings excited, and from Burke with your mind filled."<sup>2</sup> So full and cultured a mind as Burke's,—so vivid an imagination, and so intense and catholic an interest in all human affairs, past and present,—have never been placed at the service of the state by any one except by Cicero. A famous author, in the most heartfelt, and therefore perhaps the most beautiful, passage which he ever wrote, regrets that Cicero and Burke expended in political controversy the time, health, and thought which they might have more profitably bestowed upon literature.<sup>3</sup> But mankind must take thankfully whatever the like of Burke and Cicero chose to give them; and it may reasonably be contended that both of them found the material, which was best suited to their genius, in the senate rather than in the library. Unless Cicero had drunk deep of the ambitions, the passions,—and, in his case, the sorrows and terrors,—of Roman public life, the Letters to Atticus would not have been among the most thrilling and pathetic of extant compositions; and, if Edmund Burke had stood aside from Parliament, he might have done wonders in history and philosophy, but he could have created nothing of higher value than the Speech on Conciliation with America, or the Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents. It is not for politicians to question the choice of a career made by the two men who, beyond all others, have adorned and embellished the vocation of politics.

At this period of his life Burke had a sound instinct for the selection of topics which called into exercise the entire force of his marvellous capacity. He had no time to lose, for he was close upon fifty; a circumstance which went for a great deal in a generation when four men,—the Duke of Grafton, the Marquis of Rockingham, Lord North, and the younger Pitt,—became Prime Ministers at an average age of eight-and-twenty. The question of the relations between Great Britain and her American colonies had thrown all other questions into the back-ground; and it was a problem by which Burke, with his vast knowledge and his all-embracing sympathy, was sure to be attracted,

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or indeed any one, on any occasion. His speech was a noble performance.... I did not speak, though up twice. I was not so much hindered by my cold, which was then but slight. I waited for the Crown lawyers, expecting some of them would follow Charles Fox; but none spoke, and the debate could not lie better than he left it."

<sup>2</sup> Haydon's *Autobiography*; May 23, 1815.

<sup>3</sup> Macaulay to Ellis; Calcutta, December 30, 1835.

and which he was pre-eminently competent to handle. That disastrous controversy would never have reached an acute stage if King George's Cabinet had acted in obedience to those great principles of exalted common sense which were the main articles of Burke's creed. He had been constantly repeating, in a form of words which all readers could understand, and with a force and pregnancy on which no writer who ever lived could improve, that the temper of the people whom he governs should be the first study of a statesman, and that magnanimity in politics is the truest wisdom. Parliament, (so he freely admitted,) had a constitutional right to tax America; but it was a right which, in the condition of feeling that prevailed beyond the Atlantic, no British Minister in his senses would dream of exerting. "Whether," he said, "all this can be reconciled in legal speculation is a matter of no consequence. It is reconciled in policy; and politics ought to be adjusted, not to human reasonings, but to human nature, of which the reason is but a part, and by no means the greatest part."<sup>4</sup> That was the view which Burke earnestly impressed upon the leaders of his own party, who had hitherto been slow to recognise the full gravity of the American crisis. He rebuked their indolence with a respectful and affectionate eloquence unsurpassed in the literature of politics;<sup>5</sup> and before very long, by his precepts and his example, he succeeded in inspiring them with all his own courage, and much of his own zeal. They joined in his emphatic protest against those penal laws which, after a trial of four calamitous years, were condemned and abandoned by the very Minister who had placed them on the Statute Book. They argued against the passing madness of the hour, and they were stigmatised by their detractors as unpatriotic and un-English;—that taunt which is, of all others, the most suicidal to the true interests of England. For a high-minded people, such as ours, will not consent to learn their national duty from the criticisms of foreigners; and therefore, if it be un-English for Englishmen to speak their minds, the country will never hear the truth at all.

When war had broken out between Great Britain and her colonies, and when France and Spain had thrown themselves into the quarrel, Burke directed his attention to those elements of the situation which lay in his habitual line of thought, and with regard to which his advice was especially valuable. He left it for Charles Fox to animadvert upon

<sup>4</sup> *Observations on a Late Publication, entitled, "The Present State of the Nation,"* 1769.

<sup>5</sup> The finest of these memorable compositions was addressed to the Duke of Richmond on the seventeenth of November, 1772.

the strategical operations in America, and to expose the inadequacy of the military and naval preparations which had been made for the defence of our island; and he confined himself, as his own particular province, to what may fairly be described as the moral aspects of the war. From the summer of 1778 onwards the ministers of George the Third finally and deliberately abandoned their attempt to re-conquer the Northern and Central States of the Union; but they continued to keep the dispute alive by a series of petty and inconclusive acts of hostility directed against the civil population, rather than against the armed forces, of the enemy. It was a species of warfare which served no purpose except to irritate the Americans, and dispose them to persevere in a course of active retaliation at a time when, in their utter weariness, they would otherwise have been inclined to rest quiet, and allow France, Spain, and England to fight until one or other of them was beaten. Burke lost no opportunity of denouncing this resort on the part of the British Government to a system of pin-pricks, where sword-thrusts had failed. He condemned it as futile, and most impolitic; and he did not shrink from reprobating it as cruel and unrighteous; for he was one of those who was not afraid to follow where his conscience led him.

When Lord Carlisle and his colleagues, leaving their mission unaccomplished, withdrew themselves from Philadelphia to New York in the wake of Sir Henry Clinton's retreating army, they were in a fit of temper which was not without its excuses. They had been befooled by the Cabinet Ministers who sent them across the ocean; and their efforts to open a negotiation with Congress had been ignored by that body with an indifference which bordered on contempt. Before taking their passage back to England they exhaled their vexation, and endeavoured to salve their wounded dignity, by the issue of a valedictory Proclamation which they circulated, in an enormous number of copies, throughout the United States. They announced, in dark and ominous terms, that the world must expect a change "in the whole nature, and the future conduct, of the war," and that the British Government would henceforward direct its efforts to desolate the country, and distress the people, of America.

This extraordinary production, which excited anger rather than uneasiness among the Americans whom it was intended to frighten, was read with consternation by all sensible men in Great Britain. The attention of the House of Commons was called to the Manifesto by Coke of Norfolk in the first of those brief and weighty utterances which,

for five-and-fifty years to come, were always heard with favour by an assembly to whose taste both speech, and speaker, were in all points precisely suited. He reminded his fellow-members that the plunder and destruction of commercial towns, and defenceless fishing villages, would invite reprisals which the Board of Admiralty had taken no precautions to meet; and the young senator vehemently declared that, apart from considerations of prudence and public safety, such modes of warfare were repugnant to the humanity, and the generous courage, which had in all times distinguished the British nation. A subordinate member of the Government had provided himself with copious extracts from Puffendorf and Grotius to prove that the burning of unfortified towns, "which were the nurseries of soldiers," was perfectly consistent with the accepted rules of war; but all the respect and deference due to those antique pundits was swept away by the flood of indignant rhetoric which poured from the lips of Edmund Burke. "The extremes of war," he said, "and the desolation of a country, were sweet-sounding muted and liquids; but their meaning was terrible. They meant the killing of man, woman, and child;—burning their houses, and ravaging their lands, and annihilating humanity from the face of the earth, or rendering it so wretched that death was preferable. They exceeded all that the rights of war, as observed between civilised nations, would sanction; and, as no necessity could warrant them, so no argument could excuse them." The impression produced by Burke was so deep that the Prime Minister, and the Attorney-General, rose successively to assure the House that an interpretation had been placed upon the Manifesto which the words would not bear; but they were roughly contradicted by Governor Johnstone, who had been a brother Commissioner of Lord Carlisle, and who therefore spoke with an authority which there was no gainsaying. He had returned to England, breathing fire and fury against the Americans; and in consequence, for the first time in his life, he had been graciously received at Court when he went to pay his respects to His Majesty. Johnstone now told Parliament fiercely and repeatedly that, whatever might be alleged to the contrary, the Proclamation most certainly did mean a war of destruction. "It meant nothing else; it could mean nothing else; and, if he had been on the spot when it was issued, he would himself have signed it. No quarter ought to be shown to the American Congress; and, if the infernals could be let loose on them, he would approve the measure." No Minister of the Crown was able to gainsay a man who knew so accurately what he was talking



about, and who, (as North and Wedderburn were both aware,) gave expression to the exact sentiments held by their own strong-willed and masterful Sovereign.

Burke performed a still more notable and durable service to mankind by his protest against the employment of savage auxiliaries in a warfare between civilised Powers. His statesmanlike and impassioned oratory produced an immediate effect upon the opinion, and an ultimate and permanent change in the practice, of our own and other nations. It was said at the time, and it has been repeated since, as an excuse for Lord North's Government, that French and English commanders in former years had often taken the field, or more properly speaking the forest, with a large contingent of Indian warriors in their train. British generals had used red men as scouts for the purpose of exploring the woods, and covering the flank of their columns, during an advance through the wilderness;<sup>6</sup> and the Marquis de Montcalm, in a sad hour for his good fame, led the Iroquois into battle at Fort William Henry as a component part of his fighting force. But the Indians had hitherto been exclusively employed in aid of regular operations directed against an armed and disciplined foe. It was reserved for Lord North and his colleagues to send them forth as executioners to punish a civil population for the crime of rebellion. Cherokees and Senecas, under injunctions sent from Downing Street, were subsidised with public money, and bribed with food and brandy, and then turned loose upon some peaceful country-side in Virginia or Pennsylvania to work their will, and glut their ferocity, amidst a community of English-speaking people who had not a single paid and trained soldier to protect them; and these hordes of savages, on more than one occasion, marched to the scene of slaughter and rapine under the orders of a Loyalist officer who bore His Majesty's commission. Lord Chatham, in the last months of his life, raised his voice in condemnation of this barbarous,—and, as he maintained, this unprecedented,—policy; but he got no satisfaction from a Secretary of State who seemed to have peculiar views of his own about the Third Commandment. "It is allowable," (replied the Earl of Suffolk,) "and perfectly justifiable, to use every means which God has put into our hands."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Speech of the Earl of Chatham; *Parliamentary History*, volume XIX, page 411.

<sup>7</sup> The real character of an Indian raid upon an unarmed and civilised population has been forgotten in our time, for the very sufficient reason that the details and incidents of those raids are indescribable in decent histories. But it is possible, without defiling the printed page, to give a specimen of Indian barbarity. An interesting personal narrative of General Sullivan's punitive march through the Seneca country in the Fall of 1779

That statement was made in the House of Lords in November 1777; and, before the year was out, full particulars of the catastrophe of Saratoga arrived in England. The history of Burgoyne's expedition was one long object lesson on the military value, and moral characteristics, of our Indian allies; and Burke chose an early opportunity for driving that lesson home to the conscience of Parliament. He spoke for more than three hours to a crowded and entranced assembly. Strangers, including of course the newspaper reporters, had been rigorously excluded from the Gallery; and, though Burke was urgently entreated to publish his speech, he could not find the leisure, nor perhaps the inclination, to rekindle in the solitude of his study that flame of rhetoric which had blazed up spontaneously under the genial influence of universal admiration, and all but universal sympathy. It was generally allowed that he had surpassed all his earlier performances. He left no aspect of the question untouched; he stated, in due sequence, every important argument; and, when he let his fancy loose, he traversed the whole scale of oratorical emotion, from the depth of pathos to the height of unrestrained, audacious, and quite irresistible humour.

Burke began by laying the solid foundation for his case in a series of closely-reasoned passages of which only the outlines remain on record. These Indian tribes, (he said,) had in the course of years been so reduced in number and power that they were now only formidable from their cruelty; and to use them for warlike purposes was merely to be cruel ourselves in their persons. He called attention to the salient distinction between their employment "against armed and trained soldiers, embodied and encamped, and against unarmed and defenceless men, women, and children, dispersed in their several habitations" over the whole extent of a prosperous and industrious district. He attributed Burgoyne's defeat to the horror excited in the American mind by the prospect of an Indian invasion. The manly and resolute determination

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has recently been published in Philadelphia; and in the course of that march a small party of Sullivan's people fell into the hands of the Indian warriors. "In this place," writes one of their comrades, "we found the body of the brave, but unfortunate, Lieutenant Boyd, and one Rifleman, massacred in the most cruel and barbarous manner that the human mind can possibly conceive, the savages having first put them to the most excruciating torments by plucking their nails from hands and feet, and then spearing, cutting, and whipping them, and mangling their bodies, and then cutting off the flesh from their shoulders by pieces, tomahawking their heads from their bodies, and leaving them a prey to their dogs. O Britain, behold, and blush!"

That was how the Indians treated their male captives. For the women they too often reserved a yet more horrible fate.

of the New England farmers to save their families and their homesteads from these barbarians led them "without regard to party, or to political principle, and in despite of military indisposition, to become soldiers, and to unite as one man in the common defence. Thus was the spectacle exhibited of a resistless army springing up in the woods and deserts." Indians, (said Burke,) were the most useless, and the most expensive, of all auxiliaries. Each of their so-called braves cost as much as five of the best European musketeers; and, after eating double rations so long as the provisions lasted, they kept out of sight on a day of battle, and deserted wholesale at the first appearance of ill-success. They were not less faithless than inefficacious. When Colonel St. Leger found himself in difficulties they turned their weapons, with insolent treachery, against their civilised comrades; and over a circuit of many miles around Burgoyne's camp they plundered, and butchered, and scalped with entire indifference to the sex, the age, and the political opinions of their victims. Burke told the story of the poor Scotch girl's murder, on the eve of her intended marriage to an officer of the King's troops, with an effect on the nerves of his audience which perhaps was never equalled except by his own description, during the trial of Warren Hastings, of the treatment inflicted by the Nabob Vizier on the Oude princesses. Many of his hearers were moved to tears;—a spectacle which, in the British Parliament, is seen hardly once in a generation;<sup>8</sup> and Governor Johnstone congratulated the Ministry that there were no strangers in the Gallery, because they would have been worked up to such a pitch of excitement that Lord North, and Lord George Germaine, must have run a serious risk from popular violence as soon as they emerged into the street from the sanctuary of the House of Commons.

And then Burke changed his note, and convulsed his audience by a parody of Burgoyne's address to the Indians. It was a passage which Horace Walpole, who had collected his knowledge of it in detached morsels from many sources, pronounced to be a *chef-d'œuvre* of wit, humour, and just satire. "I wish," (he wrote,) "I could give an idea of that superlative oration. How cold, how inadequate will be my

<sup>8</sup> "Mr. Burke never displayed the powers of oratory so strongly as the other day when the affair of the contracts with the Indians was agitated. His speech drew tears from the whole House, particularly that part of it where he described the murder of Miss McReay. I had not the pleasure of hearing him, as it is at present a standing order that nobody is to be admitted into the Gallery." Letter from Sir Michael le Fleming; Berkeley Square, Feb. 9, 1778.

fragment of a sketch from second, third, and thousandth hands!" Burke related how the British general harangued a throng of warriors drawn from seventeen separate Indian nations, who, so far from understanding the Burgoynese dialect, could not even follow the meaning of a speech made in plain English; how he invited them,—by their reverence for the Christian religion, and their well-known, and well-considered, views on the right of taxation inherent in the Parliament at Westminster,—to grasp their tomahawks, and rally round His Majesty's standard; and how he adjured them, "by the same divine and human laws," not to touch a hair on the head of man, woman, or child while living, though he was willing to deal with them for scalps of the dead, inasmuch as he was a nice and distinguished judge between the scalp taken from a dead person, and from the head of a person who had died of being scalped. "Let us illustrate this Christian exhortation, and Christian injunction," said Burke, "by a more familiar picture. Suppose the case of a riot on Tower Hill. What would the keeper of His Majesty's lions do? Would he not leave open the dens of the wild beasts, and address them thus: 'My gentle lions, my humane bears, my tender-hearted hyænas, go forth against the seditious mob on your mission of repression and retribution; but I exhort you as you are Christians, and members of a civilised society, to take care not to hurt man, woman, or child.' " Burke, like Mr. Gladstone after him, was said to be deficient in humour;<sup>9</sup> but a great orator depends for his lighter effects not on a store of prepared jests and epigrams, but on the unforced gaiety by which he himself is swayed at the moment, and which he has the art and the power to diffuse among his hearers. The walls of the chamber fairly shook with applause; Lord North himself "was almost suffocated by laughter"; and Colonel Barré declared that, if Burke would only print the speech, he, on his part, would undertake that it should be nailed to the door of every parish church beneath the notice proclaiming a day of general fasting and humiliation on account of the surrender of Saratoga. That speech would explain, far better than the homily of any courtly bishop, the real causes of the disaster which had brought the nation to dust and ashes.

The oration on the employment of Indian auxiliaries, which by itself would have made the reputation of a senator, was for Burke nothing more than a splendid interlude amidst his daily and nightly labours in another field of politics. It was during the six years of this

<sup>9</sup> *Boswell's Tour to the Hebrides*; August 15, 1773.



parliament that he established his claim to rank in English history with Sir Robert Walpole, Sir Robert Peel, and Mr. Gladstone as a financier and economist of the very highest order. The period of time which he selected for making his attack upon corrupt and extravagant expenditure may appear at first sight to have been imprudently chosen. When the nation is engaged in an arduous war, a jealous and vigilant guardian of the public resources has for the most part a thankless office. Laxity of control, favouritism in the allocation of Government contracts for stores and shipping, and even connivance in responsible quarters with the grosser forms of speculation, are too often disguised under the specious title of a large-minded patriotism which does not concern itself about trifles when the safety of the country is in question; and any public man, who stands forward in defence of thrift and probity, is sure to be denounced as something little short of a traitor by all those who are making excessive or dishonest profits out of the necessities of the state. But the peers and commoners, who took part with Edmund Burke in his crusade against jobbery and prodigality, were silently conscious of the disinterestedness of their own motives, and superbly indifferent to what was said about them by people whose ill will was a compliment, and whose good word was the worst of libels. The Duke of Richmond, and the Marquis of Rockingham, and the Earl of Shelburne, and Sir George Savile, and Lord John and Lord Frederic Cavendish, had each and all of them too unimpeachable a character, and too large a stake in the welfare of England, to heed the abuse of mercenary politicians who were paid for their votes by parcels of scrip which they could sell at a premium of ten per cent. on the morning after they were allotted, and of mercantile adventurers who supplied the Transport Department of the Admiralty with unseaworthy vessels at five shillings in the pound above the market rate of tonnage. The leaders of the Opposition discriminated carefully between the class of expenditure which it was their duty to provide, and the class of expenditure which it was equally their duty to oppose. They never thwarted or obstructed any well-conceived scheme for strengthening the defences of the country. In the second year of the French war a Bill for augmenting the Militia, laid before the House of Commons on the twenty-first of June, was passed within the space of four days after long bouts of work in what was described as "a putrid atmosphere" by the members who inhaled it; and in the same week a Bill for facilitating the enlistment of seamen was brought forward

after midnight, and carried through all its stages before the House rose on the morrow.<sup>10</sup> Burke and Fox, as well as all their political allies and personal followers, opened the national purse-strings freely to the requirements of military efficiency; while they ruthlessly exposed, and fearlessly assailed, a system of financial practices ruinous to the taxpayer, and gravely and increasingly dangerous to the liberties of Britain.

Those liberties had been in jeopardy from the moment when George the Third, in the full vigour of early manhood, and with a force of will, and determination of purpose, which almost reached the level of genius, set himself deliberately to build up a solid and enduring structure of personal government. To maintain in power ministers of his own choice, irrespective of the estimation in which they were held by their countrymen; to exercise his veto on legislation, not by announcing through the mouth of the Clerk of the Parliaments that the King would further consider the matter, but by contriving that the measures which he disapproved should be defeated in the Lobby of one or another of the two Houses; "to secure to the Court the unlimited and uncontrolled use of its vast influence, under the sole direction of its private favour;"<sup>11</sup> those were the objects which he pursued, and attained, by methods opposed to the spirit, but compatible with the processes, of the Constitution. The King had the wit to see "that the forms of a free, and the ends of an arbitrary, government," might be reconciled by a course of action which avoided the outward show of despotism. Before he had been ten years on the throne he was in a fair way to succeed where Charles the First and James the Second had failed; and his policy, while less fraught with peril to the safety of the monarch than was the policy of the Stuarts, was infinitely more demoralising to the character of the nation. George the Third had no occasion to march his Guards to Westminster, or commit the leaders of the Opposition to the Tower of London, as long as he could make sure of a parliamentary majority by an unscrupulous abuse of Government patronage, and, (where need was,) by direct and downright bribery. "The power of the Crown," said Burke, "almost dead and rotten as Prerogative, has grown up anew, with much more strength, and far less odium, under the name of Influence." Everything, (so this famous patriot declared,) had been drawn from its holdings in the

<sup>10</sup> *Parliamentary History*; volume XX, pages 915 to 969.

<sup>11</sup> *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents*. 1770.

country to the personal favour of the prince. That favour was the sole introduction to office, and the sole tenure by which it was held; until at last servility had become prevalent, and almost universal, "in spite of the dead letter of any laws and institutions whatsoever."<sup>12</sup>

The machinery of corruption was worked under the habitual and minute supervision of the King; and with good reason. In previous reigns the leaders of both parties,—Harley and Bolingbroke, and Walpole, and Newcastle,—had bribed to keep themselves in office; and now George the Third was bribing, on his own account, in order to retain in his own hands the secure possession of autocratic power. The unsavoury revelations that appear on almost every page of the royal letters to Lord North enable us faintly to conjecture the character of those still less avowable secrets which did not bear to be recorded in black and white, and were reserved for a private conversation between the monarch and the minister. The official correspondence which the King most thoroughly enjoyed was that which he exchanged with Mr. John Robinson, the Patronage Secretary of the Treasury, who was proverbially known for as shrewd and shameless a trafficker in the human conscience as ever priced a rotten borough, or slipped a bank-bill into the palm of a wavering senator. All the departments of electoral and parliamentary management were administered by this adroit and devoted servant beneath the close and constant inspection of the master's eye. When a general election was in prospect the King began to save up a special fund to meet the initial expenses of the contest.<sup>13</sup> He knew the circumstances of all the landed proprietors who had a borough at their disposal;—which of them could afford to keep back one of his two seats for a son or a nephew, and which of them was prepared to part with both; how many of them would be content to take their money in pounds, and how many would stand out for guineas. He condescended even to those ignoble details which the least fastidious of parliamentary candidates leaves to the sinister industry of a subordinate agent. "Lord North," (he wrote,) "acquainted me with his wish of supporting Mr. Powney for the borough of New Windsor. I shall get my tradesmen encouraged to appear for him. I shall order, in consequence of Mr. Robinson's hint, the houses I rent in Windsor to stand

<sup>12</sup> *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents.*

<sup>13</sup> "As the Dissolution is now fixed for Wednesday, August 30th, I think it right to transmit the money to you which completes up to this month the £1000 per month I have laid by. . . . The amount of the notes is £14000." The King to J. R., Windsor Castle; August 21, 1780.

in the parish rate in different names of my servants; so that will create six votes.”<sup>14</sup>

When the King had got his nominees duly elected to Parliament he did not abandon them to their own devices, but took excellent care that they should perform his behests within the walls of Westminster. Before he sat down to his early breakfast on the morning after a critical division he already had looked to see whether any of their names were missing on the list of ministerial voters. Tellers of the Exchequer, and Storekeepers of the Ordnance, and Vice-Treasurers of Ireland, and Paymasters of Marines, and Rangers of the Royal Forests, and Registrars of the Chancery of Barbadoes, and Brooms of the Bedchamber, and holders of open pensions for life, and holders of secret pensions during pleasure, and Clerks of the Board of Green Cloth, and the eight Lords of Trade marching to order like the section of an infantry regiment, and the whole crowd of place-holders from the King's Turnspit, who hired a poor wretch at two shillings a week to perform his functions in the Royal Kitchen,<sup>15</sup> up to the Envoy Extraordinary at the Court of Savoy, “who made a sinecure of his post, and left a secretary at Turin, while he enjoyed his friends and his bottle in London”;<sup>16</sup>—these remarkable senators, one and all, were perfectly aware that, while they were free to neglect their official duties at Dublin, or Portsmouth, or in the West Indies, or on the Continent of Europe, they would have to be inside the House of Commons when the door was shut, and the question put, or their gracious sovereign would know the reason why. When there were not enough well-paid appointments to go round the whole circle of expectants those left out in the cold were conciliated by a round sum in hard cash. “Mr. Robinson,” said His Majesty, “shewed his usual propriety in transmitting to me last night the list of speakers in the debate, as well as of the division. I take this opportunity of sending £6000 to be placed to the same account as that sent on the 21st of August.”<sup>17</sup> The means which the King employed were sanctified in his own mind by the ideal perfection of the object at which he was aiming. “It is attachment to my country,” he wrote, “that alone actu-

<sup>14</sup> This letter was addressed to the Secretary of the Treasury in May 1780. The member for Windsor, as His Majesty's own local representative, got his full share of the Secret Service money. “Mr. Powney,” wrote Lord North to Mr. Robinson, “stipulated at first for only £1000. He has, I believe, had £1500 or £2000. What does he want now?”

<sup>15</sup> Speech of Earl Talbot, Lord Steward of the Household, April 16, 1777.

<sup>16</sup> *Evening Post* of May 11, 1779.

<sup>17</sup> The King to J. R. Queen's House; March 6, 1781.



ates my purposes; and Lord North shall see that at least there is one person willing to preserve unspoiled the most beautiful combination that ever was.”<sup>18</sup> It was a combination which has presented itself under a very different aspect to honest and discerning Englishmen. “Of all ingenious instruments of despotism,” said Sydney Smith, “I must commend a popular assembly where the majority are paid and hired, and a few bold and able men, by their brave speeches, make the people believe that they are free.”

The enormous, and perpetually growing, cost of this flagitious system was ostensibly provided by the King himself from the resources at his own command. George the Third called the tune, because he paid, or was supposed to pay, for the music. A Civil List of three-quarters of a million pounds a year had been settled on him, once for all, at the commencement of his reign, and was exempt thenceforward from the control of Parliament. He enjoyed, on the same agreeable conditions, the receipts from the Duchies of Cornwall and Lancaster; whatever surplus he could draw from the kingdom of Hanover, and the Bishopric of Osnaburgh; lucrative Admiralty dues, and Crown rights, and various odds and ends of taxation then regarded as perquisites of the monarch;—as well as the hereditary revenues of Scotland, and the Civil List of Ireland, which was a veritable gold mine of pensions and salaries for obsequious English politicians who did as the King bade them at Westminster. The entire sum exceeded a million annually, at a time when the average expenditure of the country, in a year of peace, fell considerably short of five millions.<sup>19</sup> The English Civil List was encumbered with the stipends of the Judges, and with the outfit and maintenance of British Ministers abroad, whether they were living at their posts in the capitals to which they were accredited, or whether they were tippling, and voting, with the Bedfords in London; but otherwise the whole of this colossal fund was at the absolute and unfettered disposal of the monarch. It was amply sufficient to have maintained the Court in regal splendour and overflowing comfort, and would have enabled George the Third to give himself the satisfaction, (which the greatest rulers of all ages and countries have regarded as their most valued privilege,) of sparing something, in times of national emer-

<sup>18</sup> The King to Lord North. Queen's House; April 11, 1780. 15 min. past 8 a.m.

<sup>19</sup> In the year 1767 the total expenditure of Great Britain, exclusive of charges connected with the National Debt, amounted to £4,618,000; in 1768 to £4,235,000; and in 1769 to £4,304,000. *Return of Public Income and Expenditure, Part I; as ordered to be printed by the House of Commons in July 1869.*

gency, to relieve the distress, and contribute to the safety, of the State. The appanage of the throne was generous, and even magnificent, when estimated by the standard of private incomes which then prevailed. Lord Shelburne, who did not race or gamble, but who lived nobly in town and country, gave it as his experience that "a man of high rank, who looked into his own affairs, might have all that he ought to have, all that could be of any use or appear with any advantage, for five thousand pounds a year." But the disbursements of the Royal Establishment were in excess of two hundred thousand pounds annually; and never were the current expenses of any household in more extravagant disproportion to the wants and habits of the master.

George the Third lived very sparingly,—a conscientious ascetic amidst a society which sadly needed examples of temperance. His boiled mutton and turnips, and his jug of barley-water, on a hunting-day, and the tea and bread and butter which sustained him during an afternoon of hard toil following upon a morning of ceremonial duties, excited the mockery of the idle, and the admiring envy of the wise.<sup>20</sup> In other respects his ways were those of a great English country gentleman with the eyes of the world upon him. He liked to feel a fine horse under him when he was galloping after his stag-hounds, and to see the villas and garden-walls, which bordered the Western road, fly past his coach-window as he drove in from Kew to take his seat at the head of a Council-board. He knew good furniture from bad; he loved, with a Platonic affection, the aspect of famous and classical books in tall editions and choice bindings; and there were consummate artists among his subjects competent to gratify his taste in both particulars. He gave his dress no less thought, and no more, than became a monarch. His costumes were suited to the manifold, and very genuine, occupations in which he was engaged; on occasions of State their materials were costly, and their colours perfectly chosen; and, excellent husband that he was, his wife could never be too richly and gaily bedecked to please him.<sup>21</sup> Everything that his private inclinations demanded, and all the show of parade, and luxury of hospitality, which the dignity of the

<sup>20</sup> When Samuel Curwen, the Loyalist exile, was shown over the Queen's House at Buckingham Gate, his special attention was called to a silver-gilt vessel, called the King's Cup, in which the water-gruel was served which constituted George the Third's supper.

<sup>21</sup> "The King's dress, as is customary on his Birth-day, was exceedingly plain. His Majesty wore an unornamented green silk coat, and a diamond-hilted sword. The Queen was very superbly dressed. Her cloaths were most richly embroidered with gold, and trimmed with a border of flowers. On her head she carried nine very large jewels, and a diamond crown of a beautiful form. Her stomacher was one broad glare of splendour." *London Evening Post*. June 5, 1779.

British throne called upon him to display, might have been provided for half the money which was squandered year by year within the precincts of his palaces.

In all that appertained to the management of his domestic affairs the King was negligently, unfaithfully, or, at the very best, ignorantly and incapably served. His Court, (to borrow a phrase from Edmund Burke,) "had lost all that was stately and venerable in the antique manners, without retrenching anything of the cumbrous charge of a Gothic establishment." <sup>22</sup> The principal officers bore titles which came down from those feudal ages when peers and prelates were waited upon by hereditary Stewards, and hereditary Chamberlains, and even by hereditary Cooks and Cellarers. The noblemen at the head of the chief departments knew as much, and as little, about the conditions of purveying for the needs of a great modern household as their ancestors who stood round the table at Runnymede. Below them, in the official hierarchy, came a multitude of cadets of noble houses, and gentlemen of old families, with an admixture of less well-born people who had been useful to the Ministerial candidate at a contested election. Whatever might be their social station, they all had been appointed for political reasons; and for the same reasons they were seldom or never removed from office on the score of idleness, or incompetence, or even on a grave suspicion of dishonesty. Every branch of the internal administration of the royal palaces was absurdly over-manned; everybody, except the humblest delegates and understrappers, was very lightly worked; and the occupants of the best-paid places for the most part were not worked at all. The household books were kept by two Treasurers, a Comptroller, a Cofferer, and a whole tribe of subordinate clerks and accountants. The royal clothes were in charge of the Master of the Robes, the Keeper of the Wardrobe, the Keeper of the Removing Wardrobe, the Groom of the Stole, the King's Valet, and the King's Valet's Deputy, who knew a great deal more about the contents of the Dress Closet than all his superiors together. It was the same in every corner of the royal household. The Peers, on a notable occasion, were positively thrilled by a frank outburst of irrepressible emotion from Earl Talbot, who, in his vocation of High Steward, did his best to administer, loyally and zealously, the department which he superintended. It was difficult, (said that nobleman,) to keep in order the menial servants of the royal family, when the profits were enjoyed "by persons of a certain rank, and the services were performed by those of another." He

<sup>22</sup> Burke's Speech on Economical Reform; February 11, 1780.

had attempted an economical reform in the early part of His Majesty's reign by diminishing the number of daily dinners, the expense of which it was impossible to regulate, and by granting instead a handsome subsistence allowance to some of the leading officials. But these gentry now came back to the Palace at meal-times, and claimed to be fed at the King's cost without forfeiting a single shilling of their board-wages. They insisted, moreover, on eating at separate tables, no less than twenty-three of which were spread daily in various apartments of the Palace. The picking and stealing was incessant. The most flagrant abuses were rampant in the kitchens, the butteries, the stables, the wardrobe, and more especially in the royal nurseries;<sup>23</sup> and waste and prodigality, as their inevitable consequence, had brought debt and humiliation in their train. "His Lordship," we are told, "drew a most melancholy picture of the domestic situation of the sovereign, and how far his feelings, as a man and a master, were daily wounded. He appealed to his brother Peers if there was one of them could rest quietly on his pillow while he was conscious that his tradesmen were made miserable on his account, and were threatened with bankruptcy and ruin. The very coal merchant who supplied the royal household had six thousand pounds due to him; and so it was in proportion with all the other tradesmen. The poor menial servants, who had six quarters of their wages due to them, how pitiable was their position! Their complaints were sufficient to penetrate the most obdurate heart; and he solemnly protested that his own situation was nearly as much to be pitied, being necessarily obliged to hear these stories of distress and wretchedness without having it in his power to alleviate or remove them." Edmund Burke spoke well within the mark when he asserted that not even a royal revenue could support "the accumulated charge of ancient establishment, modern luxury, and parliamentary political corruption."

Lord Talbot's statement of the profusion and malversation which prevailed in the royal household was in no respect exaggerated; but

<sup>23</sup> "Eleven tables," said Lord Talbot, "are kept for the nurses; there being so many of that description. It is necessary each should have a separate table; for who could trust two women at the same table, and expect that they should long agree?" A very small part of this ridiculous expenditure went to feed the little princes and princesses. According to a London newspaper of the year 1780 "the Royal children, by his Majesty's command, get up early, have bread and milk for breakfast, and dine on broth and salads, seldom being allowed any butcher's meat, their solids being chiefly chickens. They drink no liquor other than whey, and milk and water, and are sometimes indulged with a glass of weak negus. Supper is the same as breakfast. In this manner, till within two years the two eldest princes lived."



the true cause of His Majesty's financial difficulties must be sought in another quarter. The deficit on the Civil List was not mainly due to the money, and the money's worth, which was mis-spent or stolen at Windsor Castle, and in the Queen's House at the bottom of the Green Park, but to the far larger sums which had been continuously, deliberately, and only too effectively, devoted to the worst of purposes outside the Palace walls. The fact was that most of the ready cash which ought by rights to have gone in paying the King's butcher, and grocer, and coach-maker, had been consumed in buying Members of Parliament; in corrupting the daily Press; in subsidising needy men of letters on a scale of remuneration much higher than their pens would have commanded in the open market; and in persecuting authors, publishers, printers, compositors, and printers' devils for their respective shares in the production of pamphlets and newspaper articles which displeased the Court. Those ruinously expensive operations had been in full swing ever since the date when the young King first made up his mind to assert the power of the Crown by putting Pitt out, and Bute in. George the Third speedily exhausted the hundred and seventy thousand pounds of savings left him by his wise old grandfather, who found it cheaper, as well as less troublesome, to govern through a Minister possessing the confidence of Parliament and the country; he emptied the Privy Purse; and he incurred in addition heavy obligations which he was totally unable to meet. In February 1769 Parliament was asked for a cool half million to defray the King's debts. The essential nature of the demand was analysed and exposed by George Grenville and Barré in the one House, and by Lord Chatham in the other. They openly affirmed,—what every one of their hearers in his secret conscience knew to be true,—that the money, which the British people had contributed in perfect good faith towards supporting their monarch in ease and dignity, was used to debauch the virtue of their own elected representatives, and to poison the wells of politics. But the voice of warning and remonstrance was drowned with clamour in the Commons, and stifled with chilling silence by the Lords; for that worst of bad Parliaments contained hundreds of borough-members, and scores of peers, who stooped to accept those wages of servility the lavish provision of which had embarrassed, and in the end had beggared, their royal master.

Those were halcyon days for the bribed and the briber; but, by the time that the Civil List was again declared to be insolvent, a change had come over the face of the waters. When in April 1777 the King

requested Parliament to enable him to discharge another debt of over six hundred thousand pounds "incurred in the expense of his household, and of his civil government," it was evident that the whole rank and file of the Opposition, and not their leaders only, had taken the lesson of the past eight years to heart. The wording of the Royal Message was insidious; but it did not beget belief, and it aroused the resentment natural to men who are invited to take action injurious to their own interests, and distasteful to their own feelings, on transparently false pretences. When it was suggested that the Master of the Horse, and the Treasurer of the Royal Chamber, should be called upon to supply details of expenditure in their several departments those functionaries returned for answer that they had "no material suitable for that purpose," and that it was impossible for them to make up any such accounts as the economists in the House of Commons demanded. But on the other hand it came out that within the last few years a sum of six hundred thousand pounds,—as nearly as possible the exact amount of the excess on the Civil List,—had been disbursed under the head of Secret Service, for objects with which, in the great majority of instances, no one was acquainted except the King, the Prime Minister, and the Patronage Secretary of the Treasury. Furthermore it appeared that in a single twelvemonth there had been an increase of seventy thousand pounds in the outgoings of the officer charged with the payment of annuities, tenable during the King's pleasure, to certain favoured members of both Houses, and their relatives and dependants, whose names were, in the majority of cases, concealed from public knowledge.<sup>24</sup> The most innocent-minded of politicians could not blind himself to the conviction that the Court party, by bribing out of the resources of the Civil List, and then summoning the House of Commons to pay the King's debts and ask no questions, had obtained an unlimited power to draw upon the British people for the means of suborning the British Parliament. There was already a National Debt, to bear the cost of those foreign wars in which the nation had been engaged; and now there was a Royal Debt as well, incurred to supply the King with the means of carrying on an internal war against those among his own subjects who did not share his personal views on domestic and colonial politics. That war was prosecuted by George the Third with exceptional zest and relish, as

<sup>24</sup> *Annual Register* of 1777, chapter 5 of *The History of Europe; Parliamentary History*, volume XIX, pages 103 to 187; *Return of Public Income and Expenditure*, July 1869.

is shown in his confidential letters to Lord North, which contain at least ten words about the iniquities of Rockingham, and Chatham, and Fox, and Burke, and Camden, for every three that are bestowed upon the insolence of the Americans, or the treacheries of France and Spain. The members of the Opposition would have been more, or less, than human if they had silently and obediently voted away large sums of money to be expended in destroying their own careers, and enforcing a policy repugnant to their own cherished doctrines and principles. It was incumbent on the real Whigs, who sat opposite Lord North, to defend the independence of Parliament, the most vital article of their time-honoured party creed, against the sham Whigs who sat behind him.

When it became known that the Government intended to pay off the King's debts, and increase the amount of his Civil List by a hundred thousand pounds a year, Lord John Cavendish moved a Resolution preparing the way for a Parliamentary enquiry into the financial aspects of the question. Wilkes took the floor, and addressed the House at a length proportioned to that enormous amount of Secret Service money which the King's ministers had spent over their reiterated attempts to ruin him. He was heard by his brother members eagerly and sympathetically at first, and patiently and respectfully to the end. There was a general feeling that, having been wrongfully kept outside Parliament during so many years, he now had a right to make up for his lost opportunities. When Wilkes had resumed his seat, and handed his manuscript to the reporters, the argument rose to a level worthy of the occasion. Burke was in his very happiest vein; and Charles Fox,—the record of whose masterly performance occupies less than three columns in the *Parliamentary History*, as against sixteen columns of John Wilkes,—“made a speech that even courtiers allowed to be one of his finest orations.”<sup>25</sup> But the advocacy of Fox and Burke was soon overshadowed in importance by an expression of opinion from an unusual, and most unexpected, quarter. The proposals of the Government were adopted after some long debates, and crowded divisions; and on Wednesday the seventh of May “the King, seated on the throne, adorned with his crown and regal ornaments, and attended by his Officers of State, the Lords being in their robes,” commanded the attendance of the Commons at the bar of the House of Peers.<sup>26</sup> The Speaker, at the head of his flock, presented to His Majesty the

<sup>25</sup> *Walpole's Last Journals*; April 18, 1777.

<sup>26</sup> *Parliamentary History*; volume XIX, page 213.

Bill for the better support of the Royal Household, and then proceeded to address the Sovereign in language which recalled the dignified traditions of the great Parliaments in the first forty years of the seventeenth century. "At a time," he said, "of public distress, full of difficulty and danger, their constituents labouring under burdens almost too heavy to be borne, your faithful Commons postponed all other business, and, with as much despatch as the nature of their proceedings would admit, have not only granted to your Majesty a large present supply, but also a very great additional revenue;—great, beyond example; great, beyond your Majesty's highest expense."<sup>27</sup> All this, Sir, they have done in a well-grounded confidence that you will apply wisely what they have granted liberally."

Sir Fletcher Norton had correctly interpreted the better mind of the assembly over which he presided. When the Commons were once again beneath their own roof, it was moved that his Address to the King should be printed; and the motion was carried *nem. con.*—a phrase which, in the Journals of Parliament, signifies that no sounds of dissent were audible when the question was put from the Chair. One member of the House, however, was not in harmony with the general feeling. Rigby had behaved with unmeasured effrontery throughout the discussions on the Civil List;<sup>28</sup> and now, on Friday the ninth of May, while discoursing on a kindred topic, "he turned with vehemence towards the Chair, and arraigned the conduct of the Speaker with great acrimony."<sup>29</sup> The Speaker, in few and impressive words, appealed to the Vote which stood on the Journals of the House as a proof that the sentiments which he had expressed were the sentiments of the House, and not his own particular sentiments, as the Paymaster of the Forces had asserted; but Sir Fletcher Norton's protest only served to draw down a fresh, and fiercer, attack from the Right Honourable Gentleman. "Mr. Rigby," according to the official account,

<sup>27</sup> "Several members, who took notes of this speech, wrote 'wants' instead of 'expense.'" The supposed distinction between the force of those two words became the text for much comment.

<sup>28</sup> On an afternoon when Lord North had replied with courtesy to a great many questions from various quarters of the House about the details of the Civil List, Rigby got up, and "attacked the Opposition very violently. No accounts, (he said,) were ever given, or ought to be given. He was astonished how the Noble Lord could waste his time in answering all the trifling questions which had been put to him. For his part, if he were in the Noble Lord's situation, he would make it a rule never to answer a question put by an individual member in his place." *Parliamentary History*; volume XIX, page 156.

<sup>29</sup> *Parliamentary History*; volume XIX, page 224.



“spoke of the Chair in terms very nearly bordering on disrespect, and proceeded to great heat, which seemed to make the Treasury Bench uneasy.” Uneasiness deepened into positive panic when Charles Fox started up, and, snatching his chance with the promptitude of a born tactician, moved that “Mr. Speaker, in his speech to His Majesty, did express, with just and proper energy, the zeal of this House for the honour and dignity of the Crown.” The Ministers tried every expedient to divert Fox from his purpose. Welbore Ellis was put up to cajole and entreat, and Thurlow to bully; but Fox replied that no power on earth should induce him to withdraw his motion. “He was satisfied,” (so the report runs,) “that the House would never consent to their own degradation and disgrace in the person of their Speaker, nor would contradict on a Friday what they had approved on the Wednesday immediately preceding. It had been said that the speech was not grammar. If the speech was not grammar, it abounded in good sense, and conveyed the true, unbiassed, sense of the House, and of every man on either side who had not been bought over to a sacrifice of his principles and his conscience.” The fire and sincerity of the young orator swept the air clear, and aroused cordial enthusiasm in the virtuous and the honest, and a touch of penitence in some who had dallied with corruption. Rigby himself was cowed, and grumbled out the semblance of an apology; Fox saw his Resolution passed without a division; and then, on the motion of an independent member, the thanks of the House were specifically and unanimously voted to Mr. Speaker for his speech to His Majesty. That was the first defeat inflicted upon the Court in the memorable series of parliamentary campaigns which now was opening. The King had reason on his side when, at fifteen minutes past ten on that same evening, he wrote to the Prime Minister to say that Mr. Rigby would have done well to let the matter rest.

When Edmund Burke consented to stand for Bristol he had told his future constituents that he could not answer for his own abilities, but that of his industry he was sure. That was no vain pledge; for during the six years of his connection with Bristol City he set an example which since his day has been followed by many, but surpassed by none. It may be affirmed, broadly but truly, that Burke’s course of action between 1774 and 1780 elevated the conception of senatorial duty to a higher level than it ever reached since the early days of the Long Parliament, and conspicuously higher than it had maintained during

the fifteen years which had elapsed since George the Third ascended the Throne. Those years had been wasted in a barren and acrimonious struggle for place and salary. The King's Ministers, and the King's Friends, could spare no attention to the accumulating arrears of current legislation which the needs of the country imperatively demanded; and the whole period of Personal Government had been sterile of all fruit which did not, sooner or later, turn bitter in the mouth. It was left for Burke to remove that reproach from the fair fame of the House of Commons, and to prove what might be accomplished by a private member, who was likewise a genuine patriot, amidst the din of arms abroad, and the clash and clamour of selfish interests at home. The worthy forerunner of Romilly, and Lord Ashley, and Richard Cobden, he found leisure, in those crowded and noisy Sessions, to initiate many valuable reforms, and to carry some of them to completion. Not the least noteworthy of his undertakings, and his successes, was the extension of religious toleration to a great body of his fellow-countrymen whose conduct had long ago ceased to afford any sort of excuse for the cruel and insulting treatment to which they continued to be subjected.

The Roman Catholics of Great Britain had remained at the mercy of those oppressive laws which dated from the time when their predecessors were unfriendly to the dynasty established by the Great Revolution. They still were forbidden to acquire land by purchase. The entailed estates of heirs, who had been educated in Jesuit schools and colleges on the Continent of Europe, were liable to forfeiture in favour of the Protestant who stood next in the succession; and a Roman Catholic priest, who officiated in the services of his Church, might be condemned to imprisonment for life at the instance of a common informer. Lord Mansfield and Lord Camden,—fearless and righteous magistrates who were the ornaments of the two great parties in the State,—had done their utmost to protect the liberty and property of these innocent people; and the Crown was not slow to grant a free pardon in cases where the Courts of Justice had no choice except to convict on evidence, and sentence the condemned man to a barbarous punishment. The executive authority had every disposition to mitigate the severities of the Statute Book; but Roman Catholics were tired of living on sufferance; and they knew only too well that dormant laws might at any moment be awakened into baleful operation by a sudden frenzy of popular passion. They had long ere this begun to resent the invidious and unfounded suspicion of disloyalty under which they

laboured; and now, when a new French war had broken out, and their country was in dire peril, they had no mind to be accounted among the enemies of England. In May 1779 a humble address was placed in the King's hands by Lord Petre, who in the course of the following autumn entertained his sovereign so royally during his inspection of the Militia Camp upon Warley Common. It was signed by the Duke of Norfolk, the Earls of Surrey and Shrewsbury, Lord Clifford, and Lord Arundell, and a great multitude of peers and commoners, many of whom bore names hardly less historical than those which headed the list. These eminent representatives of their ancient faith united in assuring His Majesty that, "in a time of public danger, when his subjects could have but one interest, and ought to have but one wish and one sentiment," they, and their co-religionists, held no opinions adverse to his government, or repugnant to the duty of good citizens; and they emphatically asserted their attachment to the civil constitution of their country "as perfected by that Revolution which had placed his illustrious house on the throne of these Kingdoms."

In face of such a declaration the penal legislation of King William the Third was a scandal and an anachronism, which no leading man on either side of politics was able to defend, or willing to perpetuate. A time arrived, only too soon, when the great conservative reaction, attendant upon the excesses of the French Revolution, terrified the majority of our statesmen,—including alas! Edmund Burke himself,—into the paths of religious intolerance; but the earlier parliaments of George the Third were notably free from any trace of bigotry. The House of Commons contained many high-minded and thoughtful men admirably capable of vindicating, by speech and action, the freedom of the human conscience; and the rank and file of their colleagues, who enjoyed the good things of the present moment, and who took a superficial, and all too easy, view of moral problems, had at all events the qualities of their defects, and were genuine Epicureans in their reluctance to tyrannise over the beliefs of others. There was only one man among them who could have written the Fifteenth and Twenty-first Chapters of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*; but they all were readers of Gibbon's book, and few of them had any fault to find with his treatment of ecclesiastical questions. Roman Catholics, who petitioned for the relaxation of the penal laws, had no reason to anticipate difficulties within the walls of Parliament; though the perils which threatened them outside those walls were of a gravity which it was impossible to exaggerate. A gay and good-humoured scepticism

was the tone among the upper ranks of society, while the middle and lower classes were still swayed by intense and uncompromising emotions. The prejudices and antipathies kindled by two centuries of mutual persecutions and proscriptions still smouldered in many thousand breasts; and the cry of No Popery, that most potent of all incitements to violence and disorder, only waited for a demagogue unprincipled enough to raise it. But Edmund Burke, who was the exact opposite of a demagogue, was diligent in the redress of grievances even in cases where he was quite sure to suffer for it at the polling-booth. He undertook to forward the claims of the Roman Catholics; and he cared so much for the success of their cause that he was willing to obey a sound instinct which taught him to keep his own personality in the back-ground. He began by enlisting the influence of Charles Fox on behalf of his clients, which was no hard matter; for throughout Fox's life any project, which appealed to his sense of justice and humanity, had all the greater fascination for him in proportion as the espousal of it seemed likely to damage his own political interests. A Catholic Relief Bill,—which Burke had suggested, and probably had drafted,—was committed to the charge of Sir George Savile, on the ground that such a proposal, “would come with more weight from an opulent and respected country gentleman.”<sup>30</sup> That was by no means an exhaustive description of Savile's qualifications for the task; inasmuch as a long course of self-education in theological research had made him unusually competent to handle such a topic.<sup>31</sup> The introduction of the measure was seconded by Dunning, the ablest of the Opposition lawyers. The Bill, lucidly explained, and forcibly recommended, traversed all its stages in the Lower House without a single hostile vote, and almost without a cavil; and received, as it was, with equal respect by the Peers, it became law within a bare fortnight of the day that it had been laid on the table of Parliament.

Burke's exertions on behalf of the Roman Catholic community in England produced an indirect consequence which was eminently gratifying to his deeply-rooted affection for Ireland. He had an Irish heart;

<sup>30</sup> *Memoir of the Life and Character of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke*, by James Prior; London, 1826, volume I, chapter 6.

<sup>31</sup> “Though Sir George Savile's reason was sharp, his soul was candid, having none of the acrimony or vengeance of party. He had a head as acutely argumentative as if it had been made by a German logician for a model.” *Walpole's Memories of George the Third*, volume I, chapter 24. The distinguished part which Savile played in the debate of February 1772 on Clerical Subscription in the Church of England is related in the Ninth Chapter of *The Early History of Charles James Fox*.



and, Protestant as he was, he never could bring himself to believe that the harsh and inequitable treatment inflicted upon the old religion was conducive to the true interests of his native island. When he crossed the Channel to seek his political future in London he left behind him a state-paper, of remarkable merit, insisting upon the hardship of that penal law under which the children of an Irish Roman Catholic, in case they thought fit to announce their conversion to Protestantism, could deprive their father of all power over the ultimate disposition of his own estate, and in the meanwhile could plunder him of half his income. The exposure and condemnation of that unspeakable injustice had, in the year 1764, been Burke's political legacy to Ireland; and by the summer of 1778 public opinion had grown ripe for reform, and the example set at Westminster was copied in Dublin. A measure of Roman Catholic Relief was introduced by Mr. Luke Gardiner, one of the very few members of the Irish Parliament whose principles, (according to the grudging testimony of Mr. Froude,) were above suspicion.<sup>32</sup> The Bill became law. The Roman Catholics paid their gratitude in the quarter where gratitude was due;<sup>33</sup> and not the Roman Catholics only, for the satisfaction felt by the best men of both parties was embodied in a letter to Burke from the Speaker of the Irish House of Commons. "On this happy event," (the Right Honourable Gentleman wrote,) "I sincerely congratulate you, being fully persuaded that it is of more real importance to our country than any law that has been passed during my time."

It was not the only, or the most signal, service which Edmund Burke, during those distracting years of internal tumult and foreign war, was enabled to do for Ireland. The commercial welfare of that country had been subordinated,—or rather, to speak more accurately, had been sacrificed,—to the selfish interests of Great Britain. Just a century had

<sup>32</sup> Mr. Froude goes on to say that Luke Gardiner, "as Lord Mountjoy, was to learn the real meaning of Catholic Emancipation when he was piked and hacked to death at New Ross." It is difficult to understand that Mr. Froude can have been serious in attributing the Wexford outrages of 1798 to the circumstance that the sons of a Roman Catholic landed proprietor were no longer permitted by law to rob their father. *The English in Ireland*, by James Anthony Froude; book VI, chapter 1.

<sup>33</sup> "That Address and Petition, which you left with me in the year 1764, was found by us here so excellent a performance in every respect, and set forth our grievances in so affecting a manner, that we happily resolved to begin our humble suit by laying it before the Viceroy, and requesting he would transmit it to be laid before His Majesty; which, we are sure, made such an impression as was in a great measure productive of what has since followed, far beyond expectations." *John Curry to Edmund Burke, Esq. Dublin*, Aug. 18, 1778.

elapsed since merchant vessels built in Ireland, and owned and navigated by Irishmen, had been excluded from the privilege of trading with British colonies and plantations beyond the seas. Half a generation later the Parliament at Westminster, without so much as consulting, or even forewarning, the Parliament at Dublin, placed on the Statute Book an Act which intentionally, instantaneously, and irreparably crushed to extinction the woollen industries of the dependent island. The utter prostration of Irish commerce had never been more painfully felt than during the earlier months of this French war. All access to markets on the Continent of Europe was barred by the activity of the American privateers; the monopoly of trade with the East and West Indies was reserved as strictly as ever for Scotch and English shipowners; and Belfast, and Cork, and Londonderry, and Waterford might have been frontier towns on the confines of Bohemia for all the advantage they derived from their proximity to the ocean. "Our trade here," (wrote the Speaker of the Irish House of Commons from Limerick,) "is entirely ruined. There is not a ship in our port, or the least business doing."<sup>34</sup> The prospect had seldom appeared more hopeless for Irish merchants and manufacturers, those helots of English commerce; but the hour of their emancipation was already on the eve of striking. A sincere and growing conviction that Ireland had been shamefully used was noticeable in the British House of Commons, as well as a consciousness that she was fast becoming too formidable to be trifled with; and among the leading orators of that assembly was a patriotic Irishman deeply versed in the philosophy, and the practical bearings, of trade and finance in all their branches. "Burke," (said Adam Smith,) "is the only man I ever met who thinks on economic subjects exactly as I do, without any previous communications having passed between us." A sincere and intelligent friend both of England and Ireland, Burke appealed in his speeches not only to the fears, and not only to the consciences, of his parliamentary colleagues. He directed his main efforts to awaken in their minds a rational sense of their true policy as custodians of the common and universal interests of the British empire. After the question was finally decided he reviewed the course of the controversy in a published letter. "The part," (he wrote,) "to which I attached myself most particularly was to fix the principle of a free trade in all the ports of these islands as founded

<sup>34</sup> *Right Hon. Edmund Sexton Pery to Edmund Burke, Esq.; August 26, 1778.*

in justice, and beneficial to the whole, but principally to this island of Great Britain, the seat of supreme power.”<sup>35</sup>

Burke kept the claims of Ireland before the attention of the House of Commons with an assiduity most unsuited to the Ministerial view of appropriate times and seasons. As late as February 1779 Lord North told Parliament that more than enough had already been done for Ireland, and complained that the only evidence of her gratitude for one boon was that she immediately proceeded to ask for another. Mr. Burke, (we are told,) exploded the Noble Lord’s argument with keenness and satire. He exclaimed that such horrid reasoning was too gross to dwell upon. “It was that narrow and illiberal policy which had lost us America, and would in all probability, one day or another, endanger the very existence of the British Empire.”<sup>36</sup> That day was not long in coming. Ireland had been made disagreeably aware that King George’s Government was powerless to defend her, and that, for the protection of her coasts and cities from insult and invasion, she must rely on her own valour and her own resources.<sup>37</sup> In April 1778 Captain Paul Jones appeared unexpectedly in St. George’s Channel; made prize of a Waterford brig, a Dublin merchant vessel, and two smaller Irish traders; and ended by capturing, after a desperate engagement, the only royal man-of-war which the Admiralty at Whitehall could spare to mount guard over the commerce of Ulster. The effect on the North-country Irish was instant and tremendous. That pugnacious race of civilians was stirred into universal and spontaneous action by a passion of shame and resentment, accompanied by just that moderate dose of panic which renders a brave man the most formidable of adversaries. Forty thousand Volunteers, Presbyterians and Episcopalians alike, were speedily enrolled, and equipped for battle, with peers and great commoners, and in one case even a fighting bishop, for their colonels and generals, and squires and squireens for their regimental officers. When Paul Jones, in the course of the autumn, returned with a powerful

<sup>35</sup> *Letter to Thomas Burgh, Esq., from Edmund Burke; Beaconsfield, New Year’s Day, 1780.*

<sup>36</sup> *Parliamentary History*; volume XX, page 137.

<sup>37</sup> Mr. Thomas Conolly, a great Irish landlord,—who sat in the British Parliament, where he was held in high account,—complained to the House of Commons that “the unfortunate kingdom of Ireland, which had no hand in the American War, and was never to reap any benefit from it, lay exposed everywhere to the descent of the enemy.” Dublin itself, (he said,) had been open to invasion till the latter end of the summer of 1778, when two “Newcastle Cats,”—or, in other words, two colliers from the Tyne,—were mounted with sixteen guns each, and stationed as guardships at the entrance of the harbour.

squadron, manned by two thousand sailors, he was informed by his friends on shore that he would find himself in a hornets' nest if he ventured to land an armed party at any point on the Irish seaboard.

Such an enterprise was beyond the courage of even a Paul Jones, and he sailed away to the North-east coast of England, to reap fresh laurels on an element where he was more at home. Disappointed of any immediate prospect of a brush with a foreign enemy, the Irish Volunteers determined to take advantage of so unique an opportunity for extorting the redress of their national grievances from the reluctant hands of a British ministry. On the fourth of November, the anniversary of King William the Third's birthday, many thousand musketeers paraded in front of his statue on College Green, firing volleys, waving flags emblazoned with ominous and significant devices, and trailing cannon placarded with the motto "Free Trade or This." King George and his Cabinet were once more faced by the old difficulty,—much nearer their own doors, and, if possible, in a more alarming shape. Their regular army was on the other side of the Atlantic, engaged in an attempt to enforce the payment of a customs-duty imposed upon America by the Parliament of Great Britain; their home garrison was composed almost exclusively of militia; and, if they insisted on maintaining the right of taxing Ireland without her own consent, there would be nothing for it but to leave Portsmouth and Plymouth bare of troops, and transport all our militiamen across St. George's Channel to fight the Irish Volunteers.

That was an extreme of folly too outrageous even for the Cabinet which had invented the Boston Port Bill. Before the end of November Parliament met at Westminster for the winter session; and the King's Speech contained a passage indicating, with even more than the usual circumlocution and obscurity, that his Government was prepared favourably to consider the demands of Ireland.<sup>38</sup> Those hazy and perfunctory phrases were not enough to satisfy the House of Commons, and the great majority of Edmund Burke's colleagues desired to have a statement of the situation from a public man who understood the nature of the Irish demands, and who had been consistent in his support of them. "Mr. Burke," (according to the official account,) "rose to speak; but, finding a great difficulty in making himself heard on

<sup>38</sup> "I have not been inattentive to the state of my loyal and faithful kingdom of Ireland; . . . and I recommend it to you to consider what further benefits and advantages may be extended to that kingdom by such regulations, and such methods, as may most effectually promote the common strength, wealth, and interests of all my dominions."



account of a violent cold and hoarseness, he sat down once or twice, and would have declined speaking, had he not been pressed and solicited by the unanimous sense of the House of Commons." The House was rewarded by hearing a fine explanation of the intrinsic justice and expediency of those concessions into which Lord North and his colleagues had been frightened by a menace of rebellion. Three weeks afterwards a colder, and less sympathetic, assembly listened while the Prime Minister, in an unapplauded speech, introduced Resolutions granting to Ireland the free export of her products and manufactures, as well as the privilege of trading with the British colonies under exactly the same conditions and restrictions as were enforced in the case of Scotch and English vessels. Charles Fox, in his character of Opposition leader, uttered a few sentences of cautious and guarded approval; but Burke,—the mark of all eyes, and the centre of all thoughts,—remained in his place tranquil and silent, with the silence of a wise man who has gained his point, and who leaves well alone.

James Boswell, who watched his contemporaries intently, and not ungenerously, has put upon record his impressions of Burke a little before this period of his public career. "Few men, if any," said Boswell, "enjoy continual happiness in this life. I have a kind of belief that Edmund Burke does. He has so much knowledge, so much animation, and so much fame."<sup>39</sup> There seldom has been a more striking exemplification of Bacon's profound saying that great persons have need to borrow other men's opinions to think themselves happy. Burke had his private difficulties and troubles, the full extent of which was known only to himself; and he bore them as became a man, without impatience, and with few complaints. During these very years,—when his action in the House of Commons afforded a model to all time of an industrious, a useful, and an honoured senator,—his relations with his constituents were a never-failing source of trouble and anxiety. The business men of Bristol had for some while past been sore and uneasy on account of the growing importance of Liverpool, which was rapidly displacing their city from the proud position of the second port in the kingdom, after London. But Bristol still retained its hold upon the trade with our West Indian islands, which was a source of exceptional profit to the whole community, and not to the richer merchants only; and the citizens of Bristol now learned with anger and dismay that the gains of what had been virtually a local monopoly must henceforward be shared with the capitalists and shipowners of Cork, Belfast, and

<sup>39</sup> Boswell to Temple; Edinburgh, 12 August, 1775.

Waterford.<sup>40</sup> It was true that the Act for the Relief of Irish Commerce was a Government measure, introduced and carried by the chief of the Cabinet himself; but, as long as human nature remains what it is, people who dislike a law will always vent their wrath upon an eminent public man who has been an honest and earnest advocate of the unpopular policy, rather than upon the time-serving Minister who, at the eleventh hour, has been forced by the pressure of circumstances to adopt that policy as his own. Burke's sincerity was his crying sin in the view of the Bristol electors. He might, (so he remarked in caustic terms,) have successfully faced his constituents if he had been a rival to Lord North in the glory of having refused some small insignificant concessions, in favour of Ireland, to the arguments and supplications of English members of Parliament; and if then, "in the very next session, on the demand of forty thousand Irish bayonets," he had made a speech two hours long to prove that his former conduct was founded upon no one right principle of policy, justice, and commerce. "I never," added Burke, "heard a more elaborate, more able, more convincing, and more shameful speech. The debater obtained credit, but the statesman was disgraced for ever."<sup>41</sup>

There was yet another question of prime importance on which Bristol was out of touch with its illustrious representative. The Roman Catholic Relief Bill had been accepted by the governing powers of the country with absolute unanimity. It met the approbation, (to quote Burke's words,) of "the *whole* House of Commons; the *whole* House of Lords, the *whole* Bench of bishops; the King; the Ministry; the Opposition; all the distinguished clergy of the establishment; all the eminent lights, (for they were consulted,) of the dissenting churches. This according voice of national wisdom ought to be listened to with reverence." But the payment of that long out-standing debt to justice and mercy was very differently regarded by a large section of the British people. The newspapers, most of which then reflected public opinion with singular fidelity, were outspoken in condemnation of the Catholic Relief Act; and journalists of either party strove to throw the responsibility for so unpopular a measure upon their political opponents. Whig writers laid the blame upon the Court. What, (they asked,) could induce His Majesty to accept the hospitality of Lord

<sup>40</sup> Bristol shop-keepers, the very class of voters who had been Edmund Burke's heartiest supporters, had long been accustomed to invest their savings in a larger or smaller venture on board vessels bound to Barbadoes or Jamaica.

<sup>41</sup> *Letter from Edmund Burke to John Merlott, Esq., an eminent merchant of the City of Bristol.*

Petre? The company of a Roman Catholic ought to be shunned by the King of England like the plague. How could his throne be established in righteousness unless he paid respect to the established religion of the country? Was the Court of England to become the abode of those Jesuits whom even Roman Catholic monarchs had banished from the countries which they governed? Was history to be read backwards? Was Queen Mary to be accounted as a saint, and the Paris and Irish massacres as a fiction? <sup>42</sup> The Ministerialist papers followed suit, and fastened the discredit of the obnoxious policy upon the leaders of the Opposition. The King, (they wrote,) governed the Church, as well as the State; and Sir George Savile had incurred the guilt of spiritual High Treason when he moved His Majesty to show indulgence towards believers in Transubstantiation. Roman Catholics were heretics; and no heretic could be a faithful subject. Let Sir George Savile, and his abettors, prove that heresy and allegiance were compatible; and English Churchmen might then be freed from the apprehension of having their throats cut by Papist assassins.<sup>43</sup>

The most envenomed shafts in the arsenal of party warfare were directed against Edmund Burke, who was held up to execration as the author of a deep-laid plot contrived for the ruin of the Protestant religion. All the other conspirators, (it was alleged,) were puppets in his hand, while he himself was an Irish papist, and a Jesuit in disguise. For many consecutive months he was branded in the columns of the ministerial journals by the significant nickname of "The son of St. Omer." That spiteful story soon made its way down from London to the West of England, and Burke found it incumbent on him to explain the motives of his public conduct before a crowded meeting assembled in the Guildhall at Bristol. The oration which he there delivered has taken rank among the celebrated speeches of the world. He protested, in lofty and almost contemptuous language, that he and his political associates had done justice to Roman Catholics, not because they themselves were Roman Catholics, but from their extreme zeal for the Protestant religion, which was "utterly disgraced" by the penal laws enacted in the year 1699; and from their rooted hatred to every kind of oppression, under any colour, or upon any pretence whatsoever.<sup>44</sup> On the same occasion he defined the limits of the obligations

<sup>42</sup> *London Evening Post* of November 1778. Letter signed by *Aratus* in the same newspaper.

<sup>43</sup> *Morning Post*; May 30, 1778.

<sup>44</sup> The same line of thought has since been more pithily expressed by an English prelate. Dr. Mackarness, the Bishop of Oxford, when denouncing the Bulgarian atrocities

which, as a member of Parliament, he owed to his constituents. He was ready, (so he assured them,) to perform their reasonable behests at any sacrifice of health and comfort; but his conscience was his own, and on high questions of public policy he was bound to follow the road towards which, in his judgment, the interests of the nation pointed. If the people of Bristol wanted a member who would obey their orders as blindly and submissively as Lord North, and his colleagues, obeyed the orders of the King, they must look for some one else than Edmund Burke to represent them. "It is the plan of the Court," he said, "to make its servants insignificant. If the people should fall into the same humour, and should choose *their* servants on the same principles of mere obsequiousness and flexibility, and total vacancy and indifference of opinion in all public matters, then no part of the State will be sound, and it will be vain to think of saving it."

A statesman, who is not so entirely absorbed by ambition as to lose sight of everything else that makes life worth having, will always set a high value on the enforced holiday which falls to his lot when his political adversaries are in power. The freedom and the leisure, which may be called the sweets of Opposition, were keenly appreciated by the group of eminent men who did their utmost to counteract the policy of Lord North's government; and none amongst them was endowed with such a capacity for rational enjoyment, such a wealth of intellectual resources, such an ardent and varied interest in all the circumstances of daily life, and such complete and unalloyed satisfaction in his domestic surroundings, as Edmund Burke. In his Buckinghamshire homestead, which was situated within a short walk of the river Thames at the exact point of its rarest beauty, and encompassed by his few hundred acres, every square yard of which was familiar to him, he had no reason to envy the richest of the great landholders who looked up to him as their political mentor. Most of them played at farming; but Burke's domain was not too large for the inspection of the master's eye, and the minute details of agriculture were at once his business, and his pastime. He knew, as exactly as any nobleman's bailiff, what it cost to produce his wheat, his hay, his barley, and his bacon, and what they would fetch, on any given week, in the local market; and his voluminous letters on the processes and statistics of

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in the autumn of 1876, defended himself from the charge of being actuated by religious prejudice against the Mahomedan faith. "We sympathise," he said, "with the oppressed nationalities in European Turkey not because *they* are Christians, but because *we* are Christians."



rural industry, which occupied much of his time on a wet day, when nothing was doing out of doors, may still be read with pleasure and profit. He never was dull, and never solitary. A morning's drive brought the friends of his choice down from London; and in the intervals between their visits he found company worthy of himself on the shelves of his library. He was intensely happy with a beloved wife,<sup>45</sup> and a son sufficiently graced by nature to arouse fond and extravagant hopes in the most partial and indulgent of fathers. His strong Irish sense of family clanship was displayed in his relations to a brother and a cousin, whom he treated with fraternal confidence and affection, and an absence of censoriousness carried to a degree of tolerance which unfortunately cannot be accounted among his virtues. The three kinsmen all lived together, keeping a common purse, a well-stocked cellar, and a bountiful table, and driving about the country behind a team of four black horses. A Bristol constituent, who was honoured by an invitation to Beaconsfield, found them still at breakfast at eleven o'clock in the morning. "They had," (so this gentleman wrote,) "no form about them. Everyone was at liberty to do as he pleased, and was as free and easy as if the house was his own."

Such was Edmund Burke's home, which he had arranged in all respects precisely to his liking; and he desired nothing better than to spend in that secure and peaceful retreat the whole of every month that he was not engaged in debating at Westminster. But, after he became member for Bristol, he no longer remained at his own disposal. His constituents regarded him in the light of a universal providence for the accomplishment of their personal, and sometimes extremely selfish, ends and objects; and there was no business so intricate and onerous that they scrupled to impose it on his overburdened shoulders. He could not have believed, (he said,) how very little interest they felt in the general line of public conduct observed by their representative, and how exclusively they judged him by his merits as their special agent in their private affairs.<sup>46</sup> As soon as each parliamentary session came to a close Burke's real troubles began. He was forced to apologise, almost abjectly, for reserving a very few idle days, and tranquil nights,

<sup>45</sup> Richard Champion, Burke's favourite and faithful political ally, presented Mrs. Burke with a Bristol tea-service of his own exquisite manufacture. A good many years ago some of the pieces sold "for thrice their weight in solid gold." The largest of them bore a Latin inscription signifying that they were dedicated to Jane Burke, the Best of British Matrons.

<sup>46</sup> Edmund Burke to Richard Champion; June 26, 1777.

to recover himself from the immense fatigues of his senatorial labours. "I really," (he pleaded on one such occasion,) "should have gone to town to look after all sorts of business with minuteness and vigour; but, in truth, I want a little fresh air, and repose of mind, and exercise of body. For a long time I have had very little of any of them. I am not yet a week in the country. Forbear with me a little, and I will pay thee all."

The Bristol traders had no mercy on him. They deluged him with commissions; and they were seldom at the pains of collecting beforehand such information as would enable him to perform their errands without undue and excessive drudgery to himself. He devoted an entire fortnight of one hard-earned vacation to getting their tobacco out of bond. He carried through a lengthy negotiation on behalf of a ring of soap-dealers who could not so much as supply him with the name and address of the Master of the Soap-makers Hall. In order to obtain leave for a merchant-ship to sail for the West Indies he was forced to make himself acquainted with the intricate questions of seamen's wages and of demurrage, with no assistance whatever from the owner of the vessel.<sup>47</sup> The most distasteful, and disquieting, of all his obligations was the necessity for repeated migrations to, and from, the West of England. He descanted to Lord Rockingham on the "horrid expense" of these expeditions of two hundred miles in a post-chaise, and on the dangers which an unprotected traveller was liable to encounter. Burke was robbed by two highwaymen, on Finchley Common, when on his way to Bristol; but no gentleman of the road would have found it worth his while to stop him on his homeward journey, for he always returned with empty pockets. His presence in their city was a reminder to his constituents that they had a claim on his money, as well as on his services. Five guineas for the nurse of a baby for whom he had been asked to stand as sponsor, an offer of fifty guineas reward for the discovery of a miscreant who had set fire to the warehouses on the Avon quay,<sup>48</sup> the presentation to an influential elector of a service of Bristol porcelain "on which was expended all the resources of the art," and the provision of a grand banquet to his political ad-

<sup>47</sup> "You did not," (so Burke represented to his correspondent,) "send the number of men or tonnage. I set the tonnage down at a hundred and seventy, and the men at twenty, inclusive of the master and the mate."

<sup>48</sup> Burke was urgently advised by his friends at Bristol to adopt this course because his political adversaries had been putting about that he was in sympathy with the enemies of England.

herents, with fourteen orthodox Whig toasts to follow;—those were some examples of the ceaseless, and heterogeneous calls upon Burke's slender income. A more costly sacrifice still was the futile consumption of his time, his peace of mind, and his energies. The members of both parties in Bristol, while they were agreed upon nothing else, united in demanding his frequent presence in their midst. His friends were sincerely desirous to accost and welcome their member, and his opponents wanted to have him amongst them in order to humiliate and affront him. They inserted paragraphs in the London newspapers to the effect that Mr. Burke represented Bristol, not on the ground of his property or his social position, but by virtue of his pamphlets and speeches, and that it was therefore high time for him to gratify his constituents with less stingy specimens of his oratorical talent. It was said that he held himself too stiffly, and esteemed his conversation too valuable to be wasted upon people of ordinary cleverness. He was, (so the accusation ran,) the first member for Bristol who had omitted to make a round of calls on the freeholders in the course of every twelvemonth, and to dine, as much richer men than himself had been willing enough to dine, every afternoon, for weeks together, with the Mayor and Corporation of the most hospitable and luxurious municipality in England. Burke defended himself from these imputations in a fine passage of earnest, but calmly worded, remonstrance. "My canvass of you," (so he reminded his constituents,) "was not on the Exchange, nor in the County Meetings, nor in the clubs of this city. It was in the House of Commons; it was at the Privy Council; it was at the Treasury; it was at the Admiralty. I canvassed you through your affairs, and not your person. I was not only your representative as a body. I was the agent, the solicitor, of individuals; and, in acting for you, I often appeared rather as a shipbroker than as a member of parliament."

Burke led a severe existence, and it told visibly on his physical strength, and his vital powers. He was wasted, (he said,) by fatigue and want of sleep, which in his case was always attendant on heavy labour.<sup>49</sup> He confessed to a very old friend, who had known him well in Ireland, that his present life was nothing better than a warfare. His bodily condition had an injurious effect upon his political action. Over-work and over-worry, as was inevitable with such a temperament, betrayed him into occasional outbreaks of sudden, and very formidable,

<sup>49</sup> Edmund Burke to Joseph Harford; April 4, 1780.

anger.<sup>50</sup> When his nervous system was unduly strained, his rhetoric became too emphatic, the vehemence of his language was exaggerated almost to grotesqueness, and metaphors and similes poured from his lips in a turbid and incessant stream;—for, like smaller men, when weary and out of sorts he seemed unable to bring his speeches to a finish. Joseph Galloway, the same American Loyalist who bore reluctant witness to the ascendancy which Charles Fox exercised over the House of Commons, thus wrote of Edmund Burke: “He cannot watch the passions, or accommodate himself to the temper, of his audience. He plays with the most difficult subject. He leads it through the winding mazes of his fancy. He places it in a thousand lights. He gives it an infinity of colours. We admire for a time the splendour of the dress; but the eye becomes tired with the glare. His purpled robes resemble a patched garment. He often debases the sublimest thought by the coarsest allusion, and mingles vulgarity of idiom with the most delicate graces of expression.” It is impossible to deny that such a criticism was well founded, and that Burke, during the period of the American War, was already not sufficiently careful to keep the quality of his speaking up, and the quantity down. Nor did he mend of his faults as the years rolled on. Fox was more acceptable to his hearers; and, so far as parliamentary success is the test of eloquence, Burke was surpassed in his earlier days by Chatham, and in later life by Chatham’s famous son. But at his best, and at his third and fourth best, he was a noble orator. “What,” asked Sheridan, “will they think in after times of the public speaking of this age when they read Mr. Burke’s speeches, and are told that, in his day, he was not accounted either the first, or second, speaker?”

*The fall of Charleston and the treason of Arnold now claim the attention of Trevelyan. Recounting the traitor Arnold's disillusioning experiences in England after the war, the author concludes: "It would have been well for him if the memory of his existence upon earth could have perished with him. The time arrived when the mind of America was once again stirred from its depths by the secession of the Southern States. Her historians then had something fresh to write about; but*

<sup>50</sup> It was admitted by a journalist of his own party that “the amiableness of Mr. Burke’s disposition, the pleasantness of his nature, and the benevolence and liberality of sentiment which marked his character in private life, made his friends the more regret, and his enemies rejoice at, the want of judgment, and the violence of temper,” which were too often observable in his public conduct. *London Evening Post* of June 1779.



*during the whole of the intermediate period between 1782 and 1861 their industry was almost entirely concentrated upon the events and personages of the War of Independence. The Revolutionary heroes, great and small, received each of them his allotted meed of national gratitude; while the name of Benedict Arnold, which once promised to be only less renowned and honoured than that of George Washington, was regarded by three generations of his fellow-countrymen as a byword for treachery."*

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE LEAGUE OF NEUTRALS. THE PLIGHT OF THE NATION

*Trevelyan now takes the reader to France for an appraisal of the diplomacy of the Comte de Vergennes, France's foreign minister, the statesman principally responsible for French assistance to the American insurgents and for his country's ultimate commitment to war against Britain. "Vergennes was glad to warm his hands at the fire which ravaged his neighbour's premises," Trevelyan observed, "but he had no intention of allowing the flame to die down for want of fuel." Against him England's foreign minister, Lord Weymouth, was regarded in the chancelleries of Europe "as little better than a nullity." Tribute is paid to John Adams' able role in wooing the Dutch, once war had broken out between England and Holland, and then the focus is placed on the role of the neutrals in the expanding war.*

VERGENNES, on one important respect, was the most fortunate of all statesmen who ever conceived, and directed, an ambitious foreign policy; for he had the cleverest of mankind, and of womankind also, to second his endeavours. While on the one hand he acted in concert with Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams, the two typical representatives of an approaching democratic era, on the other hand he enjoyed the ardent cooperation of Frederic the Great, and Catherine the Second,—two despotic monarchs whose names will be remembered till the end of time as the very personification of political ability and worldly success.

Frederic the Great wished well to America because he wished ill to George the Third; and, if he had given vent to his grudge against the King of England by openly espousing the claims of the revolted colonists, he would have carried the public opinion of Germany with

him. Germany, divided administratively between an almost countless multitude of petty dynasties, was beginning to feel the influence of a common national sentiment whenever the national mind was strongly excited by an interest in external events. The trend of German thought was everywhere visible in that native literature which the greatest of German rulers held in such light account. "A language," (so King Frederic wrote to d'Alembert,) "only deserves to be studied for the sake of the good authors who have made it famous, and good authors we have none; although, when my time comes to walk in the Elysian Fields, I shall be able to recommend myself to the Swan of Mantua by bringing to his notice the fables of Gellert, and the idyls of a German named Gessner." But a more genuine and virile school of literature than that of Gessner and Gellert was already at work throughout the Fatherland; and the intellectual product of the age was deeply coloured by a passion for liberty both in Europe, and beyond the seas. Klopstock the veteran poet of his nation, Herder in the prime of his powers, and Schiller in the youthful vigour of his splendid reputation, idealised the American character, envied what they regarded as the purity and simplicity of American manners, and were fervent partisans of American independence. Lessing, for all that he was State Librarian to the Duke of Brunswick, had the manliness publicly to protest against the sending of German soldiers across the ocean to crush a young nationality with which Germany had no cause of quarrel. "I would say more," (Lessing added,) "for the people are thirsting to hear the truth; but silence is commanded by the sovereign whom I serve." And Goethe, with the insight of genius, had pronounced the obscure and remote incident, generally known as the Boston massacre, to be a central date in the history of the world; and from that time forward, till the end of his very long life, he was in the habit of estimating the probable success of every great national movement by its likeness or dissimilarity to the spirit and methods of the American Revolution.<sup>1</sup>

Frederic, a true German at heart, felt a patriot's disgust for the practice of selling the sons of Germany to be military serfs of a foreign potentate; but he had no inclination whatever to go crusading on behalf of American liberty. He had just emerged scatheless and tri-

<sup>1</sup> The feeling in Germany is described in the second chapter of Mr. Bancroft's Introduction to his *Collection of State Papers from the French Archives*. Far and away his best book, it had the honour of being translated, and published in French, by the Comte de Circourt. Bancroft, as a young man, had been to all intents and purposes a German student at the University of Göttingen; and he knew Goethe intimately.

umphant, from a war which he had most reluctantly undertaken in order to preserve Bavaria from the rapacity of Austrian ambition. Vast armies had faced each other for many months in Bohemia and Silesia. There had been manœuvres and counter-manœuvres, which led in some cases to a few paltry skirmishes; but Frederic, to the intense disappointment of his younger generals and colonels, had attained the object of his efforts without a battle, and without disbursing half as much money as King George contrived to throw away over each of his unsuccessful campaigns against the American insurgents. Frederic's old sword was now once again in the scabbard; and there he was determined that it should remain. He had long ago had his fill of fighting; and he was obsessed, and almost haunted, by a horror of war, and supremely indifferent to that which men, with less experience than himself of the stern and terrible reality, affected to regard as its glory and its joy. "Let the French," he said, "if they can manage to exterminate the English, perform their *Te Deums* in Notre Dame, and sing psalms about the tongues of their dogs being red with the blood of their enemies. In the peaceful regions which I inhabit we leave all such incantations to Hurons and cannibals." "The scene in America," (he elsewhere wrote,) "reminds me of those gladiatorial combats which the Romans watched with calm and pitiless amusement. I fought in the Circus quite long enough. It is now the turn for others." With this resolution implanted in his breast Frederic persistently declined to join the coalition against England. He did not abstain from unfriendly and disobliging acts which the English Government was too much harassed and preoccupied openly to resent; but he altogether repudiated the notion of emptying his treasury, and mobilising his army, in defence of American freedom. Like Prince Bismarck after him, he flatly refused to hazard the life of a single Pomeranian grenadier for the prosecution of an object which did not immediately affect the interests of Prussia. He kept the diplomatic emissaries of Congress at arm's length,—which in itself was no easy matter. He withheld from them his permission to borrow money in Berlin; and the most generous concession which their importunity could extract from his Ministers was a promise that His Majesty would not be the last power in Europe to recognise their national independence.<sup>2</sup> Frederic, after his own ironical fashion, was a man of his word. He undoubtedly was not the last to recognise the independence of America; but it cannot be

<sup>2</sup> The Baron de Schulenberg to Arthur Lee; Berlin, December 18, 1779.



denied that he postponed recognition until Great Britain herself had set him the example.

King Frederic's fighting days were over; but none the less his ill-will was a very formidable disadvantage to any contemporary sovereign unfortunate enough to have incurred his displeasure. The position which he had won for himself in the European world is described by an unexceptionable witness of high capacity, and with good opportunities for observation. James Harris, afterwards the first Earl of Malmesbury, was British Minister at Berlin during the early stages of the American Revolution. Already, at the age of four-and-twenty, he had entered the second lap of a brilliant career in the race for honour. As a mere youth, when in charge of the embassy at Madrid, he had gained the confidence of our Foreign Office by his admirable handling of the controversy relating to the Falkland Islands; and he continued to serve his country with unbroken success until the day when he was pronounced by no less an authority than Prince Talleyrand to have been the ablest British diplomatist of his very able generation. Harris was an English statesman of the fine old school, sparing of emotion, and unsensational in his style of speech and writing; and the information contained in his official despatches may be accepted as the plain truth, and nothing over. In the year 1776 he transmitted to the Secretary of State a confidential account of the feeling entertained by Prussians towards their veteran monarch, whom he himself did not greatly love. "They consider," he said, "a word, or smile, from His Majesty as a boon; and, by never rewarding them according to their merits, they are taught to believe they have no merit at all. The superior endowments nature has given him, and the pre-eminence which he constantly affects, make them look up to him as a divinity." A precisely similar effect was produced upon all foreigners, from Royalty downwards, who came within the attraction of Frederic's company and conversation. "I never," (so Harris wrote,) "heard of any man so endued with the gift of persuasion as His Prussian Majesty." The preparations at Potsdam, for the reception of the most eminent visitors, were judged by the English ambassador to have been trumpery and sordid; and yet the King evinced no uneasiness on that account in the presence of his guests, sure as he was, "from his own reputation, and from the minds on which he was to operate, that a smile from him will have more effect than the expending of all the money in his coffers."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Harris to Lord Suffolk; Berlin, 18th March, and 27th July, 1776.

Personal contact was not needed in order to bring men under the spell of King Frederic's personal influence. His predominance in Europe had been acquired by an immense effusion of human blood, and it was now maintained by a lavish consumption of a less costly fluid. Opinions have differed with regard to his merits as a poet and an historian, and his excursions into the field of literature have been criticised with unsparing severity; but no author of any mark, and most certainly no author who himself has been a statesman and an administrator, ever failed to admit that Frederic the Great's private letters possessed the inestimable quality of being adapted to secure the object for which they were written. They came with authority from the pen of one who was the master of two hundred thousand soldiers, the owner of a treasure in gold equal to three times the annual revenue of his kingdom, and the victor of Rossbach, Zorndorff, and Leuthen;—and at the same time they were models of vigour and wit, of penetrating intuition, and profound, if dearly bought, knowledge of human nature. Frederic kept the European world in his own way of thinking by a continuous stream of brief and bright notes, or copious epistles, which it amused him to write, and which were read with pleasure and conviction. He corresponded regularly, and often, with his own ambassadors abroad, with the leading ministers of foreign governments, with the most distinguished of those French philosophers who moulded the thought of the epoch, and with royal ladies not a few; for the relentless satirist of Madame de Pompadour, and Elizabeth of Russia, could be courteous, and even charming, to women whose talents he admired, or whose character he respected. Whatever else his letters might contain they were pretty sure to be freely sprinkled with cutting remarks about the American policy of Lord North and his brother ministers, with sarcastic comments on their primitive notions of military strategy, and with marvellously accurate predictions as to the final issue of the struggle. Nor was the King of England himself treated with the indulgence which royalty is supposed to owe to royalty; for Frederic's biting denunciations of George the Third closely resemble the most telling passages in the Declaration of Independence, selected with an eye to literary effect, and seasoned with Gallic salt. Frederic's correspondents were too proud of his confidence to keep his letters to themselves. His compact and pointed sayings, and his irreverent epigrams, soon made themselves wings across the ocean; and every expression of his contempt for German princes, who sold their troops to fight against American liberty, was eagerly welcomed

in Puritan New England, where he had long been admired as the champion of Protestantism against Catholic Austria, and among the Germans of Pennsylvania, who worshipped him as their national hero.<sup>4</sup> The Prussian monarch, and the Republicans of the New World, were united by the most binding of all ties,—their detestation of a common enemy. The gratitude of Americans towards Frederic the Great was cheaply earned, and has lasted to this very hour. He ran no risks, and made no sacrifices, for their cause, and he was apt to forget their very existence as soon as they had ceased to serve his purpose;<sup>5</sup> and yet room has been found for his statute at Washington, while the unfortunate King of France, who went to war for America with consequences which ultimately were fatal to his own life, and his own dynasty, has had no monument erected to his memory in any American town or city.

There was no country in Europe where Frederic's influence counted for more than in Russia. The foreign policy of the Empress Catherine had long been watched with tremulous anxiety by both parties in the great controversy that shook the world. Impregnable against foreign invasion; containing an apparently inexhaustible supply of docile, brave, and hardy soldiers; abounding in all the materials required for the construction and equipment of navies before the days of steam,—Russia by herself would have been a formidable enemy, and a valuable ally, even if unsupported by those smaller Northern powers which obeyed her guidance, and were her satellites in peace and war. The resources of that vast community were at the absolute disposal of the reigning monarch. There was no check on Catherine's autocratic will except the opinion, and inclinations, of the courtiers by whom she was surrounded; and it was well worth the while of any foreign government to send the best man on whom it could lay its hand to represent its policy, and push its interests, at St. Petersburg. Harris was accordingly transferred thither from Berlin, and he did not relish the change. The Russian climate was worse than trying, and the times were such that he never ventured to apply for leave of absence from his post. He could not live anywhere near within his salary in a society where incomes were enormous, and hospitality profuse; and

<sup>4</sup> *Frederick the Great and the United States*; by J. G. Rosegarten, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1906.

<sup>5</sup> "I am now so busy with Bohemia, and Saxony, and Silesia, and Moravia that I hardly so much as remember there are Americans in the world." King Frederic to the Dowager Queen of Denmark; 12 September, 1778.

where claret and champagne, and fine clothes, and good furniture, and handsome carriages, and trained domestics were exotic luxuries imported at a fabulous cost. But the principal cause of his discomfort was the moral, rather than the material, aspect of the things around him; for the interior of the Russian Court, (to use his own words,) was one continued scene of debauchery, iniquity, and corruption.<sup>6</sup> An affectionate husband, whose wife was everywhere his companion, and a clean-minded gentleman, he was disgusted and sickened by the particular form of tattle and gossip which then constituted the party politics of the Russian capital. It may have been bad enough for a respectable diplomatist at Versailles to feel himself under the necessity of observing the humours, and flattering the vanity, of Louis the Fifteenth's mistresses; but the Court of Catherine the Second swarmed with a yet more scandalous, and a far more numerous, tribe,—the lovers, and ex-lovers, and lovers on pension, and lovers on probation, of Her Imperial Majesty. It was to the honour of Sir James Harris that he served his country gallantly and faithfully, and not altogether unsuccessfully, without soiling his fingers in that mire. "I have," he wrote, "a sufficient sense of the character with which I am invested not to commit it by mixing in any of the disgraceful intrigues with which I am surrounded, and for the embarking in which I find myself radically improper."<sup>7</sup>

Sir James Harris, in his confidential despatches, more than once remarked upon the extraordinary contrast between the aspect of Russia as surveyed from within, and from without. Those, (he said,) who were behind the scenes at St. Petersburg, were astounded at the dishonesty and inefficiency of the administration; while, on the other hand, "to those who live out of Russia, and who only can form their judgment of the Russian court from the great events which its interference and weight everywhere produce, it must appear as if it was conducted with superior judgment, and defective in no one essential point." The solution of the problem lay in the personal qualities of Catherine herself, who to a masculine coarseness and audacity in vice united a masculine force of mind, and a masculine obstinacy in adhering to a plan, and intrepidity in the execution of it. The great good fortune of the Empress, (so the English ambassador reported,) joined to her resolution and her parts, might always be relied upon to compensate for the dearth in Russia of skilled generals and expert states-

<sup>6</sup> Mr. Harris to Sir Joseph Yorke; Petersburg, 1st May, Old Style, 1778.

<sup>7</sup> Harris to the Earl of Suffolk; Petersburg, 20th (31st) July, 1778.



men. No higher compliment was ever paid to our own Elizabeth.<sup>8</sup>

Harris had been glad to escape from Berlin; but he found, to his sorrow, that he was not yet quit of Frederic. The predilection for the King of Prussia was so strong in official circles at St. Petersburg that His Majesty's course of action, at any given crisis, was an unfailing indication of the measures which were sure to be ultimately adopted by the Russian Government.<sup>9</sup> Russian Princes and Field Marshals, who had been on their travels, seldom failed to return from Potsdam infatuated by Frederic's "affability and goodness," and as firmly devoted to Prussian interests as the most loyal of his Prussian subjects.<sup>10</sup> Their admiration for Frederic did not displease their own royal mistress, who, with all her faults, was not prone to petty jealousy. The concord between the rulers of Russia and Prussia was of old date, and based on firm foundations. There was a difference between their ages of seventeen years, in the contrary direction from that which Catherine the Second usually sought in the case of her male friendships; and something which nearly approached the filial might be observed in her attitude towards Frederic. Thirty years before he had been the patron and military chief of her father, an insignificant prince in Northern Germany; he had engineered for her the august and exalted marriage which, though certainly no love-match either then or afterwards, was the starting-point of her immense career; and he had sanctioned the young bride's change of religion to the Greek Church with an amused indifference which was all his own. From the time that Catherine assumed the sceptre her relations with the Prussian King steadily increased in cordiality, and mutual confidence. The pair regarded themselves as set apart from the common run of sovereigns; both of them thoroughly and intimately understood their own, and the other's, interests; and they knew that they had far more to gain by hearty co-operation than by senseless rivalry. They already had been partners,—and, when they saw occasion for it, accomplices and fellow-conspirators,—in enterprises of great moment of which some were laudable, and almost all were lucrative. More especially they shared between them the dark and secret memories connected with their partition of Poland,—an incomplete operation which, if it only had stopped at that earliest stage, would have been infinitely less of a calamity both for the spoiler and the despoiled.

<sup>8</sup> Harris to Sir Joseph Yorke; Petersburg, 2nd (13th) February, 1778.

<sup>9</sup> Harris to Sir Robert Murray Keith; Petersburg, 27th February, O.S., 1778.

<sup>10</sup> Harris to Lord Suffolk; Berlin, 27th July, 1778.

For some while after the American question had forced itself upon the notice of the world Catherine's sympathies were on the balance; but her views gradually assumed shape and consistence, and she eventually embarked upon a carefully considered, and very original, line of policy which had a potent, and an ever growing, effect upon the course and issue of the war. Like other great and famous personages in ancient and modern history she cherished a favourite theory which she pursued with the ardour of a devotee, and the minute and patient industry of a specialist. Intent upon her aggressive schemes against the Mohammedans she did her utmost on system to remain at peace with the Christian Powers,—or those which passed for such,—on the Continent of Europe; and, if war broke out between any of these Powers, she made it her vocation to defend the privileges and immunities of all nations, great and small, which had refrained from taking an active part in the conflict. Catherine possessed a solid knowledge of international law; and, whenever the mistress of so many legions thought fit to raise a legal point in favour of neutrals, the jurists of the belligerent nations were bound to give her a respectful hearing.<sup>11</sup>

In the late winter of 1779 an occasion arose when the Empress was called upon to show her mettle. A Russian trader, chartered for Malaga, and laden with wheat, had been intercepted off the coast of Andalusia by the Spanish cruisers. On the pretext that her cargo had been destined to revictual the English garrison of Gibraltar the vessel was carried into Cadiz, the corn was sold by public auction, and the crew imprisoned. When the news reached St. Petersburg Catherine ordered fifteen line-of-battle ships, and five frigates, to be got ready for sea; and Prince Potemkin, who was a warm friend of England, assured Sir James Harris, "with an impetuous joy, analogous to his character," that the fleet was being fitted out with the express object of chastising the Spaniards, whose insolence, and arbitrary behaviour, Her Imperial Majesty would not tolerate. There was surprise and vexation at Potsdam, and nothing short of a panic in the Cabinet of King Louis the Sixteenth. If Russia fell foul of Spain, the naval coalition against England would be in evil case. Frederic promptly took the matter in hand, and exerted himself as strenuously as if his own

<sup>11</sup> Catherine's legal acquirements were not confined to the pages of Vattel. In the summer of 1779 she honoured Sir James Harris by holding with him a long conversation on English gardening, "in which," he wrote, "the Empress is a great adept. From this we got to Blackstone, where she soon had me out of my depth; as I believe she would many a Circuiter, being most perfectly mistress of our laws and Constitution."

kingdom was in peril. He wrote to Versailles that everything depended upon instant and full reparation being made to Russia for the insult offered to her flag; and his letter,—a more forcible document than any despatch likely to be concocted in the French Foreign Office,—was very judiciously passed on to Madrid, where it at once brought the Spanish Government to reason and repentance. And then the King of Prussia, striking while the iron was hot, took care in his communications with Russia to point the moral of the incident. He warmly applauded the readiness shown by the Empress Catherine to defend the rights of neutrals by force of arms; but he begged her to keep in mind that England, and not Spain, was the tyrant of the seas.

The King of Prussia for many months past had been exhorting the Northern Courts to resent and resist the high-handed proceedings of the British Admiralty. Every government, (he said,) which possessed a mercantile navy should take active measures for its protection, and should refuse to abandon the property of its subjects to the "brigandage and cupidity" of these domineering islanders.<sup>12</sup> That was violent language; but it was none too strong for those to whom it was addressed. The trade of all States on the coasts of the Baltic, and the North Sea, had been more than half ruined by a war in which they themselves were not engaged as principals. A Danish or Swedish merchantman, with hemp, or tar, or timber, or grain on board,—and those were the staple commodities of the North of Europe,—was always liable to be stopped, and searched, by a British frigate. The question whether the goods were contraband was decided offhand by a post-captain with no legal training, who was arbiter in a cause which nearly concerned his own pocket, and his own reputation at Whitehall as a smart and zealous officer; and, if his judgment was unfavourable, the unlucky vessel was taken by a prize crew into a British port. Remonstrances poured in through the ordinary diplomatic channels from Copenhagen, and Stockholm, and Hamburg, and Lübeck, and Bremen; but no satisfaction could be obtained from the English Foreign Office beyond a haughty answer to the effect that His Majesty's Ministers were bound to abide by their own interpretation of the law.<sup>13</sup> The general sentiment of the Northern Powers was extremely hostile to Great

<sup>12</sup> Frederic to the Queen Dowager of Denmark; January 1, 1779.

<sup>13</sup> In an important conversation, held in December 1778, Harris expounded the British theory of belligerent rights to Count Panin, the Prime Minister of Russia. "Count Panin," (so Harris reported,) "did not admit my reasoning. He said, smiling, that being accustomed to command at sea, our language on maritime objects was always too positive, and that he wished we had followed the example of France."

Britain, and very favourable to the French Government which professed, and observed, a much more liberal and considerate policy in dealing with the rights of neutrals. But the smaller States were helpless unless they could find a patron and a champion; and the Comte de Vergennes repeatedly approached Catherine of Russia with earnest appeals to undertake that office. The Empress, (he declared,) would gain much glory, and would give a noble proof of equity and magnanimity, if she made common cause with her weaker neighbours in forcing England to renounce a system which was destructive to European commerce.<sup>14</sup>

The British Cabinet at last began to recognise the danger of the situation, and Sir James Harris was commissioned to inform Count Panin that our naval officers had received special orders to refrain henceforward from detaining and searching Russian merchantmen. That, in the conception of the Bedfords, was a most flattering and seductive counter-bid for the good graces of the Empress Catherine; but they were not so well acquainted as King Frederic, and the Comte de Vergennes, with the character of the sovereign whom their offer was intended to conciliate. Catherine, on one side of her nature, was a grasping and unscrupulous woman of business, who had lent a prodigious impulse to those acquisitive tendencies of the Russian Government which have transformed the map of the world to its own advantage. But there was a romantic vein in her composition; and she sometimes was willing to pose, on a grandiose scale, as a paragon and a model of chivalry and generosity. She was the true grandmother of that Czar Alexander who in 1813, and 1814, stood forth against the Emperor Napoleon as the Liberator of Europe.

The concession of special indulgences and facilities to Russian commerce produced a result diametrically opposite to that which had been contemplated by the British Foreign Office. Catherine refused to purchase immunity for herself by the sacrifice of her less formidable neighbours, and she speedily and openly threw in her lot with theirs. On the eighth of March 1780 she issued a proclamation asserting, on behalf of neutrals, those rights and securities which were recognised by France, and denied by Great Britain; and the lead given by Russia was followed by Sweden and Denmark with suspicious and significant promptitude. The three Governments bound themselves mutually to equip, and keep on foot, a combined fleet in certain fixed proportions,

<sup>14</sup> See the despatches printed in Doniol's Twelfth Chapter on "Les Commencements de la Ligue des Neutres" in the Third Volume of his History.



and to exact a strict retaliation for every one of their trading vessels which was seized by the cruisers of any belligerent Power.<sup>15</sup> That threat, though ostensibly of universal application, in point of fact was addressed only to Great Britain; and for the British Government it became a source of vast embarrassment, and terrible and ever-increasing peril. The example of the Baltic States was imitated by all the naval countries of Europe. The Netherlands acceded to the Armed Neutrality before the year was over. Prussia gave in her adhesion in May 1781, and the German Empire in the following October. Portugal, that ancient ally of England, moved in the same direction reluctantly, and by successive steps; but she was not strong enough to stand out, and stand alone, and in the summer of 1782 Portugal likewise joined the ranks of our potential enemies.<sup>16</sup> By that time the Ottoman Porte was the only great Power whose disposition towards us still remained undecided; and, as the war went on, even the Turk found it necessary to put himself in the fashion, and take his place among the armed protectors of the Rights of Neutrals. Such was the pass to which our country had been brought by the statesmen who were entrusted with her guidance. "The wisdom of these counsellors," wrote a London journalist, "surpasses the possibility of human estimation. They have created a war with America, another with France, a third with Spain, and now a fourth with Holland. A nation or two, more or less, does not seem to be a matter of the least consideration with them. The candle they have lighted in America may, and probably will, make a dreadful fire in Europe."

Never has there been a more remarkable proof of the maritime aptitudes of our countrymen than was afforded by this long and arduous contest. They held their own at sea against half the naval Powers of the world in arms, while hampered and distressed by the ill-will and ill offices of all the others. But the complete isolation of England,—which made the assertion of her supremacy on the ocean a more difficult, and therefore a more honourable, task,—entirely par-

<sup>15</sup> "Orders have been given at Stockholm to fit out three ships of seventy guns, and three of sixty guns, on which they are working night and day. Four of them are lying at Malmoe already." London Newspaper of October 1780.

<sup>16</sup> In October 1780 access to Portuguese harbours had been forbidden to armed vessels of all nations. This was a matter of unimportance to American privateers-men who had all the ports of Spain, and France, and Holland, to choose from for the replenishment of their stores, and the sale of their prizes; but it was a serious blow to British cruisers which had no house of call, or place of refuge, between Falmouth and Gibraltar.

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alysed her military operations on land. It was not the fault of her soldiers. As far as the quality of her regimental officers, and her rank and file, was in question there seldom had been a better army for its size than the British army in America. Englishmen had been opposed to Englishmen in a succession of desperate encounters until their standard of fighting had been raised to so high a point as to astonish not only their adversaries, but themselves also, on the first serious occasion when they came face to face with a foreign enemy. The same had been the case when, very soon after our civil wars were over, Cromwell's pikemen charged the Spaniards at Dunkirk as they had been accustomed to charge at Marston Moor, and Naseby, and Preston, and Worcester; and the same result would almost undoubtedly have ensued, at the close of the war of the Secession in America, if the Emperor Louis Napoleon had not prudently shipped his army back to France before the veterans of Antietam, and Gettysburg, and Spottsylvania came in their scores of thousands to see what the French were doing in Mexico.

The occasion in question took place on the eighteenth of December 1778, when a powerful French force, which had been landed on the island of Saint Lucie from d'Estaing's fleet, was routed by fifteen companies of British infantry with a slaughter so awful as to excite the compassion of the victors. The affair lasted three hours. A hundred and eighty English were killed and wounded, and four hundred Frenchmen were buried on the field. Our officers declared with pride that their own people had shot as coolly and accurately as they themselves had been shot at from the redoubt on Bunker's Hill; although at Saint Lucie the English, for the most part, did not fire from behind defences. The grenadier battalion was commanded by the young fellow who had distinguished himself in so many of Sir William Howe's battles,—Major Harris of the Fifth Foot. "It was in this action that the Fifth," (so the regimental record runs,) "acquired the privilege of wearing a white plume in the cap, having taken from the bodies of the slain French grenadiers, the advance and élite of the enemy's force, as many white feathers as sufficed to equip every man in the regiment with the new decoration." Saint Lucie has not yet been forgotten in that famous corps, or in the Northern county with which it has always been connected. In August 1898, when the battalion made a parade march through Northumberland, "the plume fell unnoticed from the bearskin of one of the captains. It was brought to him by an agricultural labourer, who remarked as he handed it in, 'Mustn't

lose this, Sir; or you'll have to go back to Saint Lucie for another.'"

A like spirit was exhibited throughout the war whenever, and wherever, our troops came into collision with a European antagonist. Britons still remember,—they still can see in their National Gallery, admirably depicted by the hand of an American colonist,—the repulse of the French attack upon Jersey in January 1781, and the heroic death of that British officer whose energy saved the island. Nor did British artillerymen ever perform a more splendid service than when they destroyed the floating batteries at Gibraltar, and inflicted upon the combined fleets and armies of France and Spain a catastrophe which wrecked the hopes, and ruined the credit, of their commanders.<sup>17</sup> But Gibraltar, and Jersey, and Saint Lucie were nothing more than episodes in a gigantic struggle for existence, during which Britain was standing on her defence, not with invariable success, in every quarter of the globe; and the character of the war was such that no aggressive operations on European soil were so much as attempted by the British Government. Over the whole continent of Europe England had not a single friendly port at which to disembark a military expedition, or a friendly tract of country to serve her as the base for a campaign. Our militia were barely sufficient for the protection of our home shores; and our only expeditionary force was the fine and numerous army which was fighting, or idling, on the American side of the Atlantic Ocean, and which, for the purposes of European warfare, might as well have been quartered in another planet. It was a very different story from the days when the armies of Queen Anne, and George the Second, marched and conquered on the mainland of Europe, in concert with large and well-disciplined contingents of allies, led by famous captains, and inspired by a hearty enthusiasm for a common cause. "One cannot," wrote Horace Walpole in 1780, "be always in the year 1759, and have victories fresh and fresh for every post-day. We now have camps at home instead of conquests abroad. I remember an old ironic song of Dick Estcourt's:

'How with bloody French rags he has littered poor Westminster  
Hall,

O slovenly John, Duke of Marlborough!'"

<sup>17</sup> "Glory in war is not always the prize of success. It is often the consolation for defeat, when defeat is due to misfortune, and not to fault. \* \* \* But at Gibraltar, in place of glory, our generals and admirals reaped nothing but shame." Those words were written by the Duc des Cars, who was in attendance upon the Comte d'Artois when that prince travelled all the way from Versailles to see Gibraltar taken.

No one, (said Walpole,) would have occasion to make that complaint against any of the present generals.

There remains on record a striking instance of the feelings which prevailed among the best of our countrymen, irrespective of party politics, during that anxious and absorbing crisis of our history. William Cowper, after many years of melancholy silence and seclusion, had recently taken his place once more among his fellow-men, and, at the mature age of seven-and-forty, had entered upon a fruitful career of literary activity. As far as his nature was capable of partisanship he was a supporter of Lord North's Government. He began by dashing off a spirited satire upon the politicians of the Opposition, which came nearer to being a lampoon than any other production of his kindly and graceful pen. He took occasion to commemorate the valour and resolution displayed by Englishmen, under circumstances of unexampled difficulty and peril, in a noble apostrophe to England.

"A world is up in arms, and thou, a spot  
Not quickly found, if negligently sought,—  
Thy soul as ample as thy bounds are small,—  
Endure'st the brunt, and dare'st defy them all."

But Cowper, all the more because he loved and admired his country, was cruelly disappointed as he compared her present with her past. In 1770,—when his mind clouded over, and passing events became to him as though they were not,—he had left Britain in an undisputed, and apparently assured, position as the first nation in the world; and now, in the summer of 1778, he emerged from his protracted retirement to find her the object of universal, implacable, and too often triumphant, hostility. The glorious roll of our victories in the Seven Years' War had been for William Cowper an unfailing source of personal pride and satisfaction. "When poor Bob White," (he wrote in January 1781,) "brought me the news of Boscawen's success off the coast of Portugal, how did I leap for joy! When Hawke demolished *Confians* I was still more transported. But nothing could express my rapture when Wolfe made the conquest of Quebec. I am therefore, I suppose, not destitute of true patriotism; but the course of public events has of late afforded me no opportunity to exert it. I cannot rejoice, for I see no reason; and I will not murmur." In obedience to that religious belief which coloured his thoughts, and guided his conduct, Cowper was firmly persuaded that the best hope for national



recovery lay in an amendment of national morals, and in a devout and humble submission to the will, and the behests, of a Divine Providence. "It takes," he said, "a great many blows to knock down a great nation; and, in the case of poor England a great many heavy ones have not been wanting. They make us stagger indeed; but the blow is not yet struck that would make us fall *upon our knees*. That fall would save us."

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE COUNTY ASSOCIATIONS. THE LORDS LIEUTENANTS

*After reviewing the civil war waged in the Carolinas, Trevelyan returns once again to the scene in England. He shows the manifest absurdity of the then existing electoral system, and demonstrates how rotten boroughs controlled by the King's own faction provided in Parliament the kind of men who "formed a solid phalanx of drilled and disciplined partisans,—bound to the Ministry by close ties of material interest, impervious to argument, caring not one straw for public opinion, and standing in no awe whatever of their own constituents, who had been sold to them, like a parcel of serfs, attached to the soil, by the previous owner of their borough. When a division was called they went forth into the Lobby, or remained seated in the body of the House, at a whispered word of command from the Secretary of the Treasury. They cheered Lord North's speeches; they placed his Bills on the Statute Book; and they voted him all the national money which he demanded in the well-grounded expectation that a substantial portion of it would sooner or later find its way into their own pockets." Nonetheless reform was in the air, and when it came, its voice was heard in the rural counties.*

ENGLAND was in dire straits; but her case was not hopeless if only the English people possessed the common sense, and the political energy, to work out their own salvation. It was a happy feature in our national life that the standard of public duty, and of personal honour, was still as high in the English counties as in the best days of our history. The Knights of the Shire, on both sides of politics, were not inferior in station and character to the Cavalier and Puritan gentlemen who were elected to serve in the two famous parliaments of the year

1640. A Whig county member, at the period of the American war, was usually a rural magnate like Humphrey Sturt of Dorsetshire, or John Parker of Devonshire, or Edward Eliot of Cornwall,—old family names which are now merged in the titles of Peerages. The Tory county member, meanwhile, was sometimes a converted Jacobite, and almost always a sturdy fox-hunter, who wanted nothing from the Patronage Secretary of the Treasury; who had his own notions about public matters; and who kept his hands clean, and his conscience in his own control. A typical specimen of the class was the senior member for Lincolnshire, Lord Brownlow Bertie, uncle to the Duke of Ancaster, who, though inclined to the Ministry, frequently quitted the House when the question was not such “as he could vote for agreeably to his own feelings.”<sup>1</sup> A county elector very generally liked and esteemed his members, even when he differed from them in politics; and the members had good cause to be proud of their constituents. The freeholders, as a rule, were not above enjoying the fun of a contested election. They drank their favourite candidate’s health in a great deal of his own ale, and allowed themselves to be carried to the polling-town, at his expense, in a post-chaise with four horses; but they gave him their vote because he was a trustworthy party man, and an esteemed friend and neighbour. It was useless to send down to such a constituency a rich West Indian planter, or a Nabob from Bengal, or a voluble lawyer with his eye on the Woolsack, or a sprightly young courtier with a portmanteau full of Civil List guineas.

“A beardless boy comes o’er the hills,  
 Wi’ uncle’s purse, and a’ that;  
 But we’ll have ane frae ’mang oursel’s,  
 A man we ken, and a’ that.”

Such was the sentiment expressed by Robert Burns in the finest of all his election songs; and such was the dominant feeling in nine out of ten of our English counties.

The freeholders of Hertfordshire, and Monmouthshire, and Norfolk, and Yorkshire, and Northamptonshire had little in common with the sham electors in a Cornish proprietary borough, where the advowson of the constituency, which conveyed the privilege of appointing two British senators to every parliament, could be bought at a few days’

<sup>1</sup> *London Evening Post* for May 1779.

notice for thirty thousand guineas down.<sup>2</sup> The voters of the English shires exercised the franchise under an honourable sense of individual responsibility. They were proudly conscious that their counties were the last refuge of English freedom and English self-respect, and that they themselves were acting on behalf of millions of their fellow-countrymen who, at a grave crisis in the fate of the nation, had no adequate means for making their opinion felt. As the American difficulty unfolded itself in more and more alarming proportions it became apparent to reflective minds that the best hope for Great Britain was a measure of parliamentary reform which would largely increase the number of representatives allotted to populous and independent communities. Lord Chatham was the first to suggest that a third member should be added to every county "as a balance to the mercenary boroughs;" and Turgot, in a letter of great length, and of very remarkable power, informed one of his friends in England that the same line of thought had led him to the same conclusion. "If," he wrote, "in your political agitations you would reform your Constitution by making elections annual, and by granting the right of representation in a more equal manner, your gain from the American Revolution would perhaps be as great as that of America herself; for your liberty would remain to you, and your other losses would be soon repaired."<sup>3</sup> That was the view of the two wisest statesmen, and ablest administrators, in the two leading nations of the world; but it was very far from being the view of the Bedfords. When young William Pitt, holding his father's creed, and aspiring to carry out his father's policy, proposed to add several representatives to the metropolis, and assign another Knight of the Shire to every county, Rigby told the House of Commons, briefly and roughly, that he would rather see more members given to Old Sarum, "where there was but one house," than to London, which in his judgment had quite enough members already.

"We are all well," (wrote Edmund Burke in September 1779,) "as far as we can be so in the present dreadful state of anxiety to every man in the nation except those they call Ministers." A sense of public danger, and private distress and poverty, was just then seldom ab-

<sup>2</sup> A careful calculation, made with full knowledge of the circumstances, in or about the year 1863, proved that the price, or fancy-price, of a borough returning one member to Parliament had by that time risen to sixty thousand pounds. In this case the seat was soon afterwards disfranchised by Mr. Disraeli, and the purchaser lost his money.

<sup>3</sup> *Reply of Lord Chatham to an Address from the Common Council of London*; June 1, 1770. Lord Chatham to Lord Temple; April 17, 1777. Turgot to Doctor Richard Price; Paris, March 22, 1778.



sent from the reflections of all thoughtful Englishmen. There have been few periods in our history when so large a proportion of our people kept a jealous, an attentive, and a most intelligent watch upon the course of public events. England was bound hand and foot by the trammels of an inequitable political constitution; but her mind was active and uncontrolled. That trait in the national character is finely and faithfully depicted in another letter which, two years previously, Burke had addressed to one of his Bristol supporters. "You will not," he there said, "listen to those who tell you that these matters are above you, and ought to be left entirely to those into whose hands the King has put them. The public interest is more your business than theirs; and it is from want of spirit, and not from want of ability, that you can become wholly unfit to argue or to judge upon it." The inhabitants of those great industrial constituencies which had retained their independence, their self-respect, and their integrity, thoroughly understood the nature of the existing crisis, and had detected the source from which emanated the flood of calamity that overspread the land. They clearly saw that the time had arrived when it behoved them to take their fate into their own hands, and declare an open and uncompromising war against secret influence, and parliamentary corruption. The long and arduous contest on which they now entered,—with sad and heavy hearts, but with inflexible resolution,—was marked by striking and unexpected alternations of success and failure. But the will of the people at last prevailed as against the power of the Court; and the country was rescued, only just in time, when it already stood upon the brink of ruin.

In December 1779 a political agitation, on a scale surpassing anything which was reached until the crisis of the Reform Bill of 1832, rose like a thunderstorm from the blue, and spread with startling rapidity throughout our island. Yorkshire, with its vast acreage; its wealth of coal and iron; its woollen industries, which so recently topped the markets of the world, but which never again could flourish until the country was once more at peace;—and, above all, with its manly, shrewd, and masterful, but law-abiding population;—stood to the front as a worthy fugleman of that spontaneous national movement. On the last day but one of the old year the freeholders of Yorkshire were convened in County Meeting. They attended in force, undeterred by the inclement season, and by the formidable distances which most of them had to travel. They knew the road to York; for, when a general election came, every qualified householder of the

three Ridings, in whatever corner of those six thousand square miles his dwelling stood, had been under the necessity of finding his way to the provincial capital in order to cast his vote. Six hundred land-owners, and millowners, and graziers, and farmers, and tradesmen crowded the body of the hall; while among them, and opposite to them, sat the Dukes of Devonshire and Rutland; the Marquis of Rockingham; the Earls of Scarborough, and Effingham, and Egremont,—together with Earl Fitzwilliam of Wentworth House, and of County Wicklow in Ireland, who by himself was more of a potentate than three out of four of the lesser German princes. When doubts were thrown in the House of Lords upon the respectability of the Yorkshire meeting, Rockingham, suiting his arguments to his audience, affirmed that there were persons present on that occasion, “within the compass of a single room, who possessed landed property to the amount of eight hundred thousand pounds per annum.” Side by side with the peers, and on an equality with them, were such commoners as Mr. Edward Lascelles of Harewood, and Sir James Lowther, and Sir George Savile. The distinguished group included the heirs and namesakes of three out of the seven noblemen who, in June 1688, at deadly hazard to their own lives and estates, had signed the invitation to William of Orange. The Opposition journals triumphantly enumerated a large contingent of clergymen of the Established Church who dignified the assembly by their presence, and who evinced a zealous interest in the proceedings; but even a Whig historian must admit that this free manifestation of Whig sentiment in such an unusual quarter may have been encouraged by the aspect of the patrons of so many hundred livings who were arrayed in serried ranks upon the platform. The hall was crammed to its utmost capacity, but the meeting was not packed in the sense in which that term is so often used. Any freeholder, whatever were his political opinions, might come, and stay, and speak, and vote if he could find seat or standing room; and the longest, and certainly the most provocative, address came from the mouth of a supporter of the Government.

The extreme view held by the Court party was expounded by Mr. Leonard Smelt, the sub-governor of George the Third's two eldest sons, and a well-known talker in London society. He began by protesting that it was strange presumption to refer to His Majesty as a servant of the public,—a name which, (it may be remarked in passing,) even so autocratic a monarch as James the First regarded as among the proudest of his titles to honour. Mr. Smelt vehemently declared

that King George was the best patriot, or rather the only patriot, in the nation; and that, if any grievances existed, they arose from the Crown having too little power rather than too much. He told the manufacturers, who did not take the information kindly or quietly, that, so far from being ruined by the war, they were not taxed heavily enough; and he then went on to apostrophise, in what he intended to be scathing language, the great territorial proprietors who had lent their countenance to the popular movement. "When those," he said, "who possess, from hereditary claim only, all the distinctions of society, and who have a thousand of their fellow-creatures employed on hard work to contribute to their ease and luxury, talk of the equality of men, and their right to change the government under which they live, all subordination, all order, all decency is at an end." Sir George Savile,—who could split hairs, and chop logic, with the best when the subject demanded it,—summed up the case against Personal Government in the plain and downright style that suits the taste of Yorkshire; and a petition to the House of Commons, drawn up beforehand by his skilful pen, was read to the meeting, and adopted amidst a tempest of acclamation. The gist of the matter was contained in a single sentence. The petitioners, (so it was represented,) observed with grief, that, notwithstanding the calamitous and impoverished state of the nation, much public money had been improvidently squandered, and many individuals enjoyed sinecure places, and pensions unmerited by public service; by which means the Crown had acquired a great and unconstitutional influence which, if not checked, might soon prove fatal to the liberties of the country. The Ministerial press pronounced the document to be an overt act of treason, which rendered its author liable to the condign penalties inflicted upon the Jacobites after the rebellion of 1745. "The battlements of York," wrote the *Morning Post*, "will be the first ornamented, and will speedily be dismantled of the remains of the unhappy insurgents to make room for some heads of the true viper-breed of Rockinghams and Saviles." It was a prophecy which missed fulfilment; and the city of York, as all good North-countrymen know, contains to this hour a very different memorial of that historical County Meeting. Sir George Savile died in 1784; and within the cathedral, against the outer wall of the choir, amidst architecture as august and beautiful as any in the Kingdom, his statue was erected by subscription as a mark of "the public love and esteem of his fellow-citizens." He is there represented leaning on a pillar, with a scroll in his hand which purports to be the Petition of the Freeholders of the

County of York. The conception, and the framing, of that famous instrument, in the judgment of Savile's own generation, constituted the most important national service which he rendered during his honourable and serviceable career.<sup>4</sup>

The fire which had been kindled in the North set the whole country in a blaze. Within a week,—and a week was no long time for news to consume in travelling before the days of Macadam, let alone of George Stephenson,—the action taken by the Freeholders of Yorkshire was known over the whole district which now is styled Greater London. Several important noblemen, with the Duke of Portland at their head, prevailed upon the Sheriff of Middlesex to summon a County Meeting, which was held at Hackney on the seventh of January 1780. Hackney was then a pleasant semirural resort described by the Gazetteers of the period as among “the earliest of the adjacent villages inhabited by the more opulent merchants of the metropolis.” A petition was unanimously voted which prayed the House of Commons, in set terms, to adopt measures for the reduction of the too great and unconstitutional influence of the Crown, and for restraining the enormous abuses in the expenditure of public money. Hertfordshire followed suit, and Sussex, and Surrey, and Cumberland, and Norfolk, and the County Palatine of Chester; and, before the year was much older, the electors of no fewer than twenty-six of the English shires, in County Meeting assembled, had spoken their minds with the utmost frankness, but with no extravagance of language. The business of the day was not unfrequently crowned by a jovial banquet of English beef and venison, with a long list of significant and suggestive political toasts which most certainly were not drunk in home-made English wines. The discussions in these County Meetings were always serious and orderly, and entirely free and open; but there was little difference of opinion when the matter came to a vote. In Somersetshire, where North himself was Lord Lieutenant, the Court and the Cabinet did not find a single supporter. The Earl of Sandwich had thought it worth his while to attend the proceedings at his county-town in person. He brought down with him a motley train of sham Huntingdonshire freeholders with fictitious qualifications,—a Government contractor, two members of the Greenwich Hospital staff, some officials from the General

<sup>4</sup> An amusing account of the Yorkshire meeting may be found in a sprightly letter to Horace Walpole from an eyewitness, the Reverend William Mason. What appears to be a full report of Mr. Smelt's speech is given in the collection of pamphlets at the Athenæum Club.



Post Office, the Receiver of Waifs and Strays on the High Seas, a son of the King's Gardener, and one of the King's Beef-eaters. But the genuine electors of Huntingdonshire did not allow themselves to be browbeaten, and still less to be out-voted. "On the holding up of hands," (we are told,) "there appeared a prodigious majority for the petition. Lord Sandwich then attempted to divide the company, but the majority was so large that his friends were obscured." The Northumbrians met at Morpeth, where the only hands held up against the petition were those of "Mr. Trevelyan's curate," and a stray Scotchman from across the Border, whose name was mis-spelled by the reporters. The Duke's Steward, when he observed the tone of the meeting, had come to the conclusion not to oppose the motion; and later in the afternoon there was a marked contrast, in point of festivity, between the social gatherings of the two rival parties. "The Duke's servants dined together, sullen and discontented; while the most perfect good humour, the greatest harmony, and the most determined and independent spirit pervaded the whole company who supported the petition."<sup>5</sup>

Meetings and speeches are essential to the promotion of a cause; but all great movements, whether political or religious, depend largely for success upon the machinery of their internal organisation, and upon the silent and continuous labour which it is now the fashion to call spade-work. That truth was well known to Wesley, and Wilberforce, and to Daniel O'Connell, and Richard Cobden, and all other masters in the art of moulding and guiding public opinion; and it obtained full recognition from the able statesmen who, in the later years of the American war, engineered a national agitation against the excessive power of the Crown. The Freeholders of Yorkshire, before they left their hall, had appointed sixty of their number as a permanent committee "to carry on the necessary correspondence for effectually promoting the object of the Petition, and likewise to prepare the plan of an Association to support such other measures as would restore the freedom of Parliament." In the course of the next week Middlesex nominated a Committee of Correspondence and Association, consisting of fifty gentlemen "distinguished by rank, fortune, ability, or popularity;" and the example was followed by much the largest number of the petitioning

<sup>5</sup> The details of the Huntingdonshire and Northumberland meetings are taken from a London newspaper. A general history of the movement appears in a very long note, on pages 1370 to 1373, of the twentieth volume of *The Parliamentary History*. Allusions to the County Meetings are as frequent in the fashionable literature, and private correspondence, of the year 1780 as allusions to the proceedings of the Anti-Corn Law League in the spring and summer of the year 1845.

counties. George the Third and Lord North had no liking for the County Meetings, but they were still more gravely alarmed and perturbed by the County Associations. The traditions left by the Long Parliament, and the Civil War, were nearer and fresher by a hundred and thirty years then than now; and the very name of County Associations recalled ominous memories of those Associated Counties which had bred an Oliver Cromwell, and had contributed almost as much as the City of London itself to overset the Stuart dynasty. The East of England seemed as hot against the Crown in 1780 as ever it had been in 1642. Norfolk, and Suffolk, and Essex, and Cambridgeshire, and Herts, and Hunts, had all petitioned; and all except one were sending delegates to the General Convention of the Associated Counties, Towns, and Cities. For most of the great urban communities which, in one shape or another, had retained the privilege of popular representation, and which were accustomed to the play of active politics, eagerly and unhesitatingly threw in their lot with the popular cause. The Marquis of Rockingham, who always was careful to make good his assertions by facts and figures, informed the House of Lords that the Petition from the city of York had been signed by nine hundred and twenty persons, although not more than nine hundred and seventy-two had polled at the last election, which had been warmly contested.<sup>6</sup> Meetings had been held, and petitions voted, by the town of Nottingham with its seventeen hundred freemen and freeholders; by Newcastle upon Tyne with its two thousand five hundred burghesses, each of whom was a member of a Guild;<sup>7</sup> by Gloucester with its three thousand resident electors; and by the City of London, and the City of Westminster, situated in critical proximity to the doors of the King's Palace and the Houses of Parliament, and containing between them more registered voters than any other ten borough constituencies in the island.

The lighter aspects of the Economical Reform movement of 1780 are amusingly portrayed in the letters of the Reverend William Mason, a Canon of York Cathedral, and an admired poet, as poets then went. One of his most amusing pieces was a Birthday Ode, of a very uncourtierlike complexion. He told Lord Harcourt, (impudently enough,

<sup>6</sup> *Parliamentary History*; XX, 1350.

<sup>7</sup> Out of 2166 electors, who polled at the Newcastle contest of 1774, 186 belonged to the Guild of Merchants, 235 to the Guild of Butchers, 322 to the Guild of Smiths, and 132 to the Guild of Barber Surgeons. There were Hoastmen, and Mariners, and Felt-makers, and Pewterers, and Cordwainers, by the score; but only three Unattached Burgesses.

seeing that Lord Harcourt was a King's aide-de-camp,) that an Ode conceived in such a spirit, and sung in the Chapel Royal, with the whole choir joining in the execution, would have more effect than all the County Petitions together. Canon Mason, like other amateur agitators, was all for sensational methods. "Nothing can save us," (so he wrote to Horace Walpole,) "but what the people will never have the spirit to resolve upon. I don't mean a civil war, but a civil and pacific resolution not to pay any taxes. For instance, an exciseman comes to demand my post-chaise tax. I suffer him to bear home on his shoulders my pianoforte. \* \* \* How do you like my system? I know you dislike it, because you would sooner be taxed ten shillings in the pound than part with Cardinal Wolsey's hat, or Harry the Eighth's clock-weight." Mason's advice was not adopted. Never, before or since, has there been a great political movement more free from the taint of folly or criminality. There were no outrages; there was no turbulence; no weapons were employed except arguments; the most outspoken opponents were accorded a respectful hearing in the most crowded public meetings; and the triumph of the cause came all the sooner on that account, and was all the more sweeping and decisive. The same freedom from lawlessness and violence, and the same complete and ungrudged success, were repeated, a century afterwards, in the case of the movement for the enfranchisement of the County Householder.

Some leading men of the Opposition, among whom was Edmund Burke, were at first disinclined to expect much assistance to their cause from the action followed by the County Freeholders. They could not forget the fate of the great petition from the Congress at Philadelphia in the summer of 1775, which, if accepted in the spirit wherein it had been offered, would have ended the American war. Drawn up by John Dickinson, the most eminent of Colonial Loyalists, subscribed by leading politicians of both parties, and carried across the Atlantic by no less a special messenger than William Penn's grandson, it had been cast aside as so much waste paper when it reached its destination in London. The exhibition of indifference and disregard which, in that supreme instance, was set by the King and the Ministry, had been imitated in like cases by the House of Commons. "The great constitutional remedy of petition," wrote Edmund Burke, "is fallen into discredit already, by being thrown into the House, and neglected ever after."<sup>8</sup>

There seemed very little hope than an exception would be made in

<sup>8</sup> Edmund Burke to Richard Champion, Esq.; January 29, 1780.

favour of the Yorkshire Freeholders. Elaborate misrepresentations, going far beyond the limits of veracity, had been diligently circulated for the purpose of discrediting their Petition before it was presented to Parliament. The Ministerialist newspapers circumstantially assured their readers that these Freeholders were the dregs of mankind, and that the Petition agreed upon at the meeting had been hawked about the country until it was "scrabbled over with the marks of drunken and illiterate ploughmen," and then sent up to Westminster "to lie at a blind alehouse" where it had been signed by as many Yorkshire ostlers as could be spared from their work in the London livery stables. Sir George Savile however, nothing daunted, discharged his mission to Parliament on the eighth of February 1780. The matter could not have been entrusted to a more respected and influential advocate. Charles Fox long afterwards, drawing upon the reminiscences of a lifetime, told his nephew Lord Holland that Savile was the best speaker who had never held office.<sup>9</sup> But Savile's character was more efficacious even than his eloquence. He acquired, at an early age, a silent and uncontested authority over his parliamentary colleagues; and it was acknowledged by the more combative and factious members of his own political connection that his walking out, or staying away, was fatal to the success of any party motion.

Savile's speech, on this occasion, was well reasoned, and singularly manly and dignified, as became a country gentleman who always did his duty to his constituents and to the nation with no personal ends of his own to serve. He laboured under difficulties, for he had been extremely unwell, and his voice was weak, and far from clear; but the House was "remarkably still and attentive," and such was the silence prevailing along every bench that not a single word was lost.<sup>10</sup> He brought forward ample evidence to refute the allegation that the Reform movement had been "instigated by a few incendiaries operating upon simple and credulous people in hedge alehouses." He described that movement as "the result of the common feeling" of all ranks and all classes,—the voice of the true Yorkshire, which had already met with an echo in other parts of the country. On this point he grew warm, and even vehement; but, except when he was vindicating the honour of his county, his remarks were in a high degree

<sup>9</sup> Fox, when making this remark, coupled together the names of Sir George Savile, and William Windham. But it must be remembered that Windham eventually became a Secretary of State; whereas Savile lived, and died, a private member.

<sup>10</sup> *Parliamentary History*; XX, 1374.



courteous and conciliatory. He argued that there was nothing in the wording of the Petition which reflected on either political party, and that both parties might do themselves honour by adopting it. "The noble Lord at the head of the Government," said Savile, "if he has a mind, can by one nod induce a majority of this House to grant the prayer of this petition; or, if he pleases, he can put it off with an abundance of ingenuity and address. I call upon the noble Lord to speak out like a man, and to declare whether he means to countenance and support this Petition or not." North, when his turn came, replied shortly and very quietly. He acknowledged that the Petition had been properly introduced, and deserved to meet with "a fair and candid attention;" but it was noticed that he studiously abstained from saying anything which could be construed into an expression of willingness to approve the prayer.

There the matter should by rights have ended. But the subject was novel, and very interesting; there was a crowded House, just in the mood to enjoy a fine speech; and Charles Fox was not the man to disappoint his brother members. He rose to the occasion; and his performance was such that the pressmen, who were taking down his words in the Gallery, interspersed their report with short phrases testifying to the wonder and delight which his animation and his ingenuity evoked. London, for some days afterwards, was talking about the extraordinary success of the peroration in which Fox gave his followers the watchword for the momentous parliamentary campaign that now was opening. "I cannot imagine," (so the last score, or so, of his sentences ran,) "that any objection can possibly be made to this Petition. But some may say; 'Are we sinners above all that went before us, like those upon whom the Tower of Siloam fell? Are we more corrupt than other parliaments, which were never pestered with petitions of this kind?' No: I do not suppose you are; but, though former parliaments were as bad as you,—and none, more than yourselves, are aware of the full severity of that comparison,—there was this difference that, in those days, the people did not know it. Now they perhaps do not *see* it, but they *feel* it. They feel the pressure of taxes. They beg you not to lay your hand so heavily upon them, but to practise all reasonable economy. We on this side of the House recommend and enforce their applications. Let Ministers hearken to the petitions of the people, even though they are commended to their notice by members in opposition. Let them grant their requests, and the whole glory of so popular a compliance will be theirs. We all

remember in what loud strains their praises were sounded for conceding to the people of Ireland what the people made good for themselves with their own muskets. I will put the controversy between Ministers, and gentlemen on this side of the House, on the same issue on which the wisest of men rested the determination of the dispute between the women, each of whom claimed the living child, and disowned the dead one. We say to Ministers: 'You misapply the public money. Nay, you do worse; you apply it to bad purposes.' Ministers say to us: 'You want our places;' and thus the charge of corruption is given and retorted. Come now; let us see whose child Corruption is. Opposition are willing, are desirous, that it should be sacrificed; and Ministers have often made similar professions. The time has come to prove the sincerity of both. Let us see who will now acknowledge, let us see who will father, this dear but denied child Corruption." It may be doubted whether the most eloquent of divines, in any pulpit, has ever put King Solomon's Judgment to more effective rhetorical use; and the House of Commons unanimously ordered that the Petition from Yorkshire do lie upon the Table with a heartiness, and an emphasis, which were very inadequately expressed by that antiquated formula.<sup>11</sup>

The feeling against Lord North's Government was intensified by the deep dissatisfaction with which Englishmen resented the anomalies and abuses of their electoral system. The pioneer in the movement against all that was amiss in our parliamentary representation was a man who deserves more lively public gratitude, and more intelligent public recognition, than have hitherto fallen to his lot. The fame of Major John Cartwright is now very dim; and few, perhaps, of those Londoners whose daily business takes them past his rather melancholy and depressing statue, in a Crescent to the north of Oxford Street, ever thinks of him as a valiant champion of popular rights, to whose courageous and lifelong efforts it is largely due that they themselves have a citizen's voice in the government of their native country. John Cartwright was as much the father of Parliamentary Reform as Granville Sharp was the prime author of the agitation against African

<sup>11</sup> Ministerial journalists, after the debate on Savile's motion, quoted Charles Fox's boyish speeches at the time of the Middlesex Election as being inconsistent, (which they most unquestionably were,) with what he was now saying about the respect due to national opinion outside the walls of Parliament. Fox himself would have been the first to allow it.

slavery. Cartwright had been a brave, and most competent, fighting sailor in Chatham's war; but, when hostilities broke out between England and her colonies, he donned the red coat in place of the blue, and made himself as efficient an officer on land as he had been on board ship. The militia battalion, of which he was the life and soul, speedily became a model of discipline, good conduct, and military spirit. Cartwright had refused to draw his sword against the liberties of America; he pleased himself by reflecting that he was now engaged in defending the liberties of Great Britain against the despotic and arbitrary Government of France; and his frank and manly avowal of his convictions did him no harm either with his military, or his naval, superiors in those liberty-loving days. He retained the friendship and confidence of his old admiral, Viscount Howe; and he was held in high esteem by that Lord Percy who had covered the British retreat from Lexington, who had borne a distinguished part in the capture of Fort Washington, and who now was the general in command of the military district in which Cartwright's battalion lay. The officers of that battalion respected their Major none the less on account of his political opinions. "I have shown my colonel," (he wrote in September 1775,) "a drawing I have made of a regimental button. The design consists of a Cap of Liberty resting on a book, over which appears a hand holding a drawn sword in its defence. The motto is 'For our Laws and Liberty.'" The device was well liked; and the button continued in use in the Nottinghamshire Militia for many years afterwards. Cartwright survived to see darker days; and he eventually resigned his commission because he had given offence in high quarters by approving,—as an Englishman, (so it might be thought,) could hardly fail to approve,—the destruction of the Bastille.

Cartwright endured his full share of the persecution directed against humble people of Liberal opinions during the long years of repression and reaction which followed on the French Revolution; but all who have studied the personal history of the time cannot fail to be struck by his moral superiority to certain other radical reformers of those sad, and rather sordid, days. He belonged to a class who are never too numerous in politics, for he was an enthusiast with plenty of common sense, and altogether exempt from what then were the besetting faults of the agitator. He had none of Cobbett's fierce and aggressive egotism, of Henry Hunt's loose morality, of William Godwin's want of delicacy in affairs of money. Cartwright was generous with his purse, instead of being a beggar or a borrower; and he was always

ready with his praise and sympathy for others, instead of exacting from them a tribute of flattery and admiration for himself. Singularly forgiving towards his detractors, and even his calumniators, he did his best to sweeten the acridness of political controversy; and his simple and lofty nature, more persuasive than his arguments, gave him an assured influence over most of those with whom he came into personal contact. Horne Tooke declared in conversation that half a dozen men of Major Cartwright's firmness, in as many of the English counties, would have stopped the American war. In the year 1776 Cartwright published a treatise on Parliamentary Reform which was almost the first of its class.<sup>12</sup> It was marked by a violence and exuberance of language which the writer of it soon learned to regret,—and which he had plenty of time to tone down, for during eight-and-forty years to come he was busily engaged in issuing pamphlets, and making speeches, on the selfsame topic. The passage in his earliest book which attracted most attention was his pointed reproof to Whig magnates in both Houses of Parliament who attacked the Ministry on subsidiary questions instead of going to the root of the matter, and advocating an extension of free and equal electoral privileges to the whole community. Any leading man of the Opposition, (said Cartwright,) who should not immediately pledge himself by the most explicit declarations in favour of Parliamentary Reform, was nothing better than a factious demagogue, careless of the true interests of his country as long as he himself could hope to come in for a share of power and plunder. That was not the style in which a great nobleman, who had condescended to espouse the popular cause, expected, or liked, to be written about by a member of his own party. The Duke of Richmond,—with the book in his pocket, turned down at the offending page,—introduced himself to the author, and complained of the uncharitableness of throwing doubts upon his integrity, and upon the purity of his motives. He was agreeably surprised by the calmness and gentleness of his reception. That pair of gallant and honest men soon arrived at a common understanding which ripened into a close friendship; and the Duke did not rest satisfied until he had proved his sincerity by introducing into the House of Lords a Bill for equal electoral districts, manhood suffrage, and annual parliaments.

Towards the commencement of the year 1780 the burgesses of Not-

<sup>12</sup> "Though a younger man than yourself, I am your senior in Reform. You first published on that subject in 1776. I published in 1774." Earl Stanhope to J. Cartwright, Esq.; December 17, 1815.



tingham chose Cartwright as their delegate to the Convention of Associated Counties and Cities, where his influence at once became visible, and, before long, predominant. A vigorously drafted pronouncement in favour of Parliamentary Reform began to make its appearance among the resolutions submitted to public meetings, and on the lists of toasts which were honoured at public dinners; and the text-book of the agitation was a slashing manifesto from Cartwright's pen, entitled "The People's Barrier against Undue Influence and Corruption." This unforeseen addition to the party programme was not welcomed by Edmund Burke. The question of Parliamentary Reform, for which, at all times in his life, he had no feeling except most sincere repugnance, would in his opinion frighten back a great number of moderate and judicious people into the Ministerial ranks, and, (at the very best,) would distract attention from that question of Economical Reform which he had so near his heart. Burke's view of a political situation is always best given in Burke's own words. "I am sorry to see," (he wrote in April 1780,) "that the Committee, when they met in London, had turned their thoughts towards a change in the constitution, rather than towards the correction of it in the form in which it now stands;" and a few months afterwards he characterized parliamentary reformers as visionary politicians;—"schemers, who do us infinite mischief by persuading many sober and well-meaning people that we have designs inconsistent with the constitution left us by our forefathers."<sup>13</sup> Burke's apprehensions were shared by several of the great Whigs who immediately surrounded Lord Rockingham; but, while these worthy gentlemen were hesitating and grumbling, and lecturing each other in private letters of inordinate length, of the sort which renders so many political biographies such dreary reading, their followers promptly, and almost unanimously, took the matter into their own hands. An agitation in support of Parliamentary Reform went briskly forward, side by side with an agitation for a revision of our national expenditure; and the combined movement was stimulated by dislike of the American war, and by a growing sense of the mortal peril in which the nation stood. It was the awakening, and up-rising, of that class of citizens whom, in his own time and country, President Lincoln used to call "the plain people." The great body of industrious and independent Englishmen was at last conscious of its own strength,

<sup>13</sup> Edmund Burke, Esq., to Joseph Hartford, Esq.; April 4, 1780. Edmund Burke, Esq., to Joseph Hartford, Esq., Sheriff of Bristol; December 27, 1780.

and firmly resolved to employ that strength for the rescue and regeneration of England.

The Court and the Ministry were surprised, almost to bewilderment, by this sudden and unprecedented manifestation of national sentiment. The Bedfords, in particular, had no bounds to their indignation; and their wishes, if not their intentions, were reflected in that portion of the London press which they subsidised and inspired. The Ministerial newspapers did not scruple to bring fierce and reckless charges of treason and disloyalty against patriotic statesmen who were endeavouring to save the King, and his kingdom, from the consequences of an untoward policy. They accused Lord Rockingham of scheming to overturn the throne; and, with more exquisite absurdity still, they denounced Edmund Burke as a sworn foe of the British constitution, and a hater of the kingly office. "It is to be hoped," they wrote, "that a Great Personage may conceive so just and spirited a resentment of the indignities offered to Majesty by a certain Republican Marquis, and his Hibernian pensioner, as never to admit them to his counsels again." They foretold, with an air of speaking by authority, an approaching campaign of vengeance against all who attacked the Cabinet by speech or pen. It was positively announced that Ministers had fully determined to take proper steps against every mouth, and every printed paper, which had sought to stir up revolt among the people. Editors and publishers of Opposition newspapers were soon to learn that something more serious than imprisonment would be the reward of their seditious writings. "Fortunately for our country we happen to be very amply provided with a certain very necessary, and highly essential, ingredient for putting a finishing climax to rebellion. We have hemp,—hemp in abundance." It was idle talk, which did not even rise to the dignity of being seriously mischievous. England was in no mood for a Bloody Assize, inaugurated for the purpose of keeping Mr. Rigby, and Mr. Welbore Ellis, in office. The condition of public feeling was such that assailants of the Government enjoyed too much licence, rather than too little. They wrote more audaciously and pungently than ever; and yet press prosecutions, which had been so frequent during the fight over the Middlesex Election, had long ago fallen into complete abeyance. The Crown Lawyers were well aware that juries would refuse to convict for bold attacks upon parliamentary corruption, and for searching criticisms on the conduct of the war, which most people read with pleasure, and which everybody knew to be true; and the Cabinet feared the printers much more than the printers

feared the Attorney-General. No twelve citizens who could be got together in a box, would agree to send an Opposition newswriter to jail for reflecting upon Lord George Germaine's American strategy, or on the private morals of Lord Sandwich, or on Mr. John Robinson's method of securing a majority in the House of Commons; but on the other hand they were ready enough to lay by the heels a Ministerial newswriter who traduced a leading statesman of the Opposition as a traitor to his country, and a rebel to his Sovereign.

The Ministerial press might bluster and threaten; but the Ministers themselves were perfectly well aware that, in the last resort, they did not possess the physical force to keep the country down. For a warning of the perils in which they would be involved, if they were rash enough to embark upon a proscription of their political adversaries, they had only to cast their eyes across the Irish Channel. In England, as in Ireland, the requirements of the American war had reduced the regular army to very small dimensions; in England the main burden of national defence now lay upon the Militia, as in Ireland it lay upon the Volunteers; and in England, as in Ireland, the smartest and most efficient, and incomparably the most popular and influential, officers of the auxiliary forces were members of the Opposition party. Savile himself, and Lord Scarborough, and Lord Lumley, who between them led the Reform movement in Yorkshire, held commissions in the West Riding battalion of Militia, which was popularly known as "Sir George Savile's regiment." Such colonels as the Earl of Derby, and the Duke of Devonshire, had spared no money or trouble to provide for the health and comfort of the tenants and neighbours whom they commanded in camp and garrison; they had brought to their military duties the ardour of private citizens, and the zest and freshness of a new and engrossing occupation; and they had made themselves as capable as the best professional soldiers for every legitimate purpose of warfare. The rank and file of the Militia battalions were eager to come to blows with the French and Spaniards; but they had no desire whatever to coerce or punish their own countrymen, and least of all their own colonels, for conducting a political movement in strictly constitutional fashion.

George the Third was not blind to the risks of the situation, which he regarded as formidable, but not irremediable; and, where the King thought that he saw his way clear before him, he was never afraid to act. In those days of slow and uncertain locomotion, when the central Government for the most part confined itself to the management of

national affairs, while the provinces were strongly and solidly organised on an antique and feudal basis, the Lord Lieutenant of a county was a very great man indeed. In addition to his other important functions he was titular chief of the militia, and selected the subalterns from among those young squires who were ambitious to hold a commission in the local regiment. The ablest of these high dignitaries, and by many degrees the most obnoxious to the Court, was the Duke of Richmond. The King, who looked upon him as a personal enemy, was loth to entrust him with so large a share of military power. Richmond, foreseeing that Sussex, of all counties, would be the most exposed to the dangers of a French invasion, had a scheme for raising twenty-four additional companies of local infantry; and that proposal, (in George the Third's view,) would enable the Duke "to bring forward his own creatures." It so befell that in August 1779 this hot-headed, and very self-willed, nobleman committed an indiscretion which the King, with some reason, pronounced to be a flagrant disobedience to orders; and Lord North was directed to eject the Duke of Richmond from his position as Lord Lieutenant of Sussex, and take advice about the proper person to be appointed as his successor. "I can never," (wrote His Majesty,) "admit the idea that his expulsion is wrong lest it should make Opposition Lords resign their Lieutenancies. If this should actuate them to such a step, the sooner that office of dignity is in more friendly hands in every county the better." The Lieutenancy of Sussex was thereupon offered to three peers in turn; but the feeling of the whole district was such that they all thought it prudent to decline the honour, and the Duke of Richmond was left in secure possession of his office.

On the eighth of February 1780 the Earl of Shelburne moved for a Committee of Enquiry into the Public Expenditure in a speech of exceptional scope and power. He took into the Lobby a large following, which included Henry Herbert, who was tenth Earl of Pembroke, and the Marquis of Carmarthen. Pembroke was an officer of the King's Bedchamber, and Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire; while Carmarthen was head of the Queen's Household, and Lord Lieutenant of Yorkshire. These noblemen knew what was expected of them, and they both voluntarily resigned their Court employments; but, to their vast surprise, they were ejected from their Lord Lieutenancies,—Carmarthen on the morning of the division, and Pembroke on the morrow.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The Marquis of Carmarthen, during the lifetime of his father the Duke of Leeds, sat in the House of Lords as Baron Osborne. A few days after the Yorkshire meeting



The King made it the occasion for the assertion of a high and far-reaching doctrine. "I cannot choose," (so he told Lord North,) "that the Lieutenancy of Wiltshire should be in the hands of Opposition." England is still so much the same country that it is easy for us to judge the effect produced upon the nerves of our great-great-grandfathers by such a summary course of action. Stupendous would even now be the commotion excited in political circles if a pair of modern peers were deprived of their Lieutenancies as a punishment for voting in a party division against the Government of the day. The Lords Lieutenants, as a class, were very proud of the influence and authority attached to their office; they valued the distinction only less than the Garter; and their indignation knew no bounds when two of their number were cashiered with as little ceremony as a couple of tide-waiters or excisemen in a Ministerial borough who had polled for the Opposition candidate.

The transaction was exposed and reprobated in Parliament by the Earl of Shelburne, who had introduced the motion which Lord Carmarthen and Lord Pembroke had supported to their cost, and who resented the treatment inflicted upon them as a personal insult to himself. He urged his contention with fearless logic, and unsparing acrimony; Lord Camden discoursed with judicial gravity on the excesses and encroachments of arbitrary power; and the Duke of Richmond made a terrible example of a foolish peer who had punctuated every stage of the American controversy with blundering phrases, and who on this occasion surpassed himself by alluding to noble Lords on the Opposition benches as "enemies of the Crown." The veterans of debate exerted themselves to the top of their abilities; but the speech of the afternoon came from an unaccustomed quarter. The Duke of Devonshire, although well on in life, had never opened his mouth in the House of Lords. He felt all that reluctance to address a public assembly which others of his race, with much to say that was worth hearing, have with difficulty conquered. On this occasion, however, he spoke, and spoke out. Though he had hitherto, (he said,) been silent about politics, which were disagreeable to his taste and temper, he should think himself base and degenerate if he remained any longer indifferent, for at the existing crisis he was sincerely of opinion that the Ministry were not capable of retrieving the affairs of the country,

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he had sent a letter to the Committee "approving in general of their proceedings, but making some objection to the scheme of Association, and to the proposed Committees of Correspondence." *History of Europe in the Annual Register for 1780*; chapter 5.

and were very unequal to the task they had in hand. "I approve," he said, "of the County Meetings, and consequently of the Associations, without which the petitions would be of no avail. I have nothing to hope for except the peace, prosperity, and welfare of my native country; and I have no temptation to encourage domestic broils, or civil confusion. I have a considerable stake to lose, and can be no further a gainer than as an Englishman interested in the preservation of the Constitution, and in the invaluable rights, liberties, and principles derived from it." We are told that the whole House listened in profound silence while the Duke addressed it "with a firmness and facility which seldom accompany a maiden speech, and in a tone of voice and energy which plainly evinced the sincerity of his convictions, and the warmth of his sentiments."<sup>15</sup>

The political atmosphere was overcharged with electricity; and men, who did not neglect or scorn the teachings of history, waited in anxiety for the storm to break. The poet Cowper, in the most telling passage of an interesting letter, pointed out an essential resemblance in the results of the policy of George the Third and Charles the First. He noticed how "the undue extension of the influence of the Crown, the discountenancing and displacing of men obnoxious to the Court, though otherwise men of unexceptionable conduct and character," and the wasteful expenditure of public money, were features common to both periods; and he bade his correspondent observe that the same causes had already begun to produce the same effects as in the reign of the most unhappy of British monarchs. "It is long," wrote Cowper, "since I saw Lord Clarendon's account of it; but, unless my memory fails me much, I think you will find that the leaders of the discontented party, and the several counties in their interests, had a good understanding with each other, and devised means for the communication of intelligence much like our modern committees of correspondence. \* \* \* So many gentlemen of the first rank and property in the Kingdom, resolutely bent upon their purpose,—their design professedly so laudable, and their means of compassing it so formidable,—would command attention at any time. A quarrel of this kind, even if it proceeded to the last extremity, might probably be settled without the ruin of the country, while there was peace with the neighbouring kingdoms; but while there is war abroad,—such an extensive war as the present,—I fear it cannot."

<sup>15</sup> *Parliamentary History*; XXI, 223.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### FOX AND ADAM. ECONOMICAL REFORM. THE DUNNING RESOLUTION

A MOST important truth, which is borne in upon a careful observer by the experience of a long life passed in the handling, and the contemplation, of public affairs, is that an outburst of popular enthusiasm cannot be created lightly, and does not come by wishing. A genuine, a wide-spread, and an effective interest in political questions recurs at longer intervals of time than sanguine politicians please themselves by believing; but there is no doubt whatever that, during the early months of the year 1780, the mind of the nation was at last alert and alive, and had begun once more to concern itself with the pursuit of a national ideal. Sickened by a long course of misgovernment, and weary of an exhausting, and, (for any good purpose that could thenceforward be served by it,) an objectless war, many, and very many, Englishmen looked for the salvation of their country to better laws, and to wiser rulers. The tide was rising fast; and Charles Fox swam strongly, and with no apparent effort, on the summit of the wave. It was the most brilliant, the most prosperous, and the happiest period of his chequered existence. He enjoyed, beyond his deserts, the favour and indulgence of his contemporaries; and he had an ample share of that miraculous good fortune which, in the history of celebrated men, so often falls to the lot of youth. Nothing seemed impossible to his fresh and clear intuition, his native audacity, and his indomitable energy; and he succeeded as those succeed who cannot so much as contemplate the prospect of failure.

When matters were at their very worst at home and abroad Fox never faltered in his assured persuasion that all would yet go well with England. His cheery patriotism brightens and enlivens a long series of letters to Fitzpatrick in which his boyish handwriting reads as easily

as print; and it must be admitted that some of the phrases which he employed were still boyish enough. That intimate and unstudied correspondence gives a vivid account, drawn hot and hot from the most authentic sources, of the hopes, though not the fears, of the most critical juncture which our national history records between the time of the Great Armada, and the time when Napoleon lay encamped along the cliffs of Boulogne. On the twenty-seventh of August 1779 Fox wrote to his friend from Mr. John Parker's mansion at Saltram in Devonshire, on a day when a hostile fleet, numbering between sixty and seventy sail of the line, was hourly expected back in the English Channel, and when the only naval force immediately available for the defence of our coast was Admiral Darby's squadron in Torbay. "I shall dine," he said, "on board Jervis, Wednesday, and from thence proceed to London according as, upon the general face of things, I think anything likely to happen here. The fleet today was a most magnificent sight; \* \* \* and, faith, when one looks at it, and thinks there is a possibility of its coming to action in a day or two, *on se sent ému beaucoup*. If some things were otherwise at home, and the fleet was commanded by Keppel, one should feel very eager indeed when, even in the present damned state of things, one cannot help feeling something at the sight of it. It seems to be the opinion that, if they do come, Darby will make some sort of fight with them in the narrow part of the Channel;"—and in the peril and excitement of that fight Captain Jervis had faithfully promised that Charles Fox should share. A week afterwards Fitzpatrick informed Fox that Lord North contemplated resignation. "I thank you for your letter," was the reply, "and think the news it contained the best possible; for I really think there is now a possibility of saving the country if these foolish people will give up the thing to those who know better. Between this and the next campaign there is time for increasing the navy incredibly, or for, (what would be much better,) making a peace; which we should dare to do, and these poor devils dare not."

Throughout the whole of the year 1779 Fox, with few to help him, had been at no small pains to hearten and to unite his party. The clever men and women, who informed George Selwyn of what was passing in the ranks of the Opposition, were all in the same story. In the middle of May James Hare told his old crony that nothing important was stirring, although Charles was "in excellent wind," and all the more so for being out of place. A fortnight later on the Countess of Upper Ossory wrote that she herself was fairly sick of politics, but



that "others would grieve if there was not a Charles Fox to spirit them up." Ceaselessly and strenuously at work as long as the House of Commons was sitting, Fox spent the recess in a course of multifarious activities directed towards a well-defined and, (as the result proved,) an attainable object. His published and unpublished letters to Richard Fitzpatrick supply an indication, though far from a complete list, of his journeyings to and fro over the South of England, and of the great country-houses to which he carried, in rapid succession, his inspiring and most acceptable presence. A peer or squire, who judged that a visit from his eloquent and seductive leader would stimulate political feeling in the district, knew that the best way to make sure of his man was to send him intelligence of a flight of woodcocks; and Charles Fox attracted round him all the Whigs of the neighbourhood as certainly as the woodcocks attracted Charles Fox. Wherever he went he exerted his powers of persuasion over the task of keeping his parliamentary supporters up to the mark, and cajoling young men of wealth and leisure to stand as candidates at the general election which was now imminent. He was constant in his attendance at every place of resort where politicians congregated. He was much in Norfolk, which, next to Yorkshire, was the head-quarters of the Rockingham connection; and more especially at Keppel's manor-house, where he was never tired of talking with the Admiral, and, (if the man's own account can be trusted,) with the Admiral's gamekeeper. Halfway through October it was announced in the Fashionable Intelligence that the Honourable Mr. Fox had driven into Salisbury Camp on a Review-day in a phaeton with four horses. He was often at Newmarket, whence he maintained a watchful eye upon an ambitious project for changing the parliamentary representation of the neighbouring University. "Jack Townshend," (so Lord Carlisle reported to Selwyn,) "meets with more success at Cambridge than was expected, but I have no idea that Administration can be beat where there are so many parsons. Charles is sanguine; but that he sometimes is when reason and cool sense cannot support him." All the same, when the general election arrived, the event showed that Charles was right. His peregrinations in the course of that busy twelvemonth were on such a scale that his friends were at a loss to conjecture where he found money to pay for his post-horses. "Charles," said Lord Carlisle, "tells me that he has not now, nor has had for some time, one guinea, and is happier on that account." The inner secrets of his financial transactions were disclosed to nobody except to Richard Fitzpatrick, as

may be learned from certain passages in their mutual correspondence which do not tend to edification. None the less, before another year had elapsed, the empty pockets of Charles Fox aroused the cupidity of an unlucky highwayman who apparently took him for a portly and solvent citizen, with no liking or aptitude for a personal encounter. His prowess on that occasion, which was quite in character, established his popularity among the very numerous class of people who, whenever they started on an expedition in chaise or saddle, were haunted and pre-occupied by the terrors of the road.

Then came the County Meetings; and the young champion, with a group of experienced strategists to advise him, and a host of devoted followers to back him, flung himself with renewed ardour into the thickest of the fray. The agitation for economy and reform acquired strength and impetus during the opening weeks of the year 1780; and on the second of February,—at the exact point of time when the centre of interest was transferred from provincial towns and cities to the floor of Parliament,—a public meeting, of dimensions hitherto unknown in England, was convoked in Westminster Hall, which the citizens of Westminster still occasionally used as a place of assembly for the transaction of their local business. The Opposition claimed that a surprisingly large proportion of the fifteen thousand electors of the borough were gathered together beneath that famous roof; but any veteran of the platform, who has been accustomed to amuse himself during the duller moments of a public meeting by making a rough computation of the numbers in front of him, will distrust the estimate of enthusiastic partisans.

A very large gathering, however, it undoubtedly was; and the whole space in that vast chamber, over which the human voice could reach, was covered by a sea of eager faces. The dais was crowded with Townshends, and Grenvilles, and Bentincks, and Cavendishes; Charles Fox took the Chair; and a petition, framed on the same lines as the Address of the Yorkshire Freeholders, was moved by Alderman Sawbridge, and seconded by John Wilkes. Two passages in the Chairman's speech may still be read in full. He commented with unfeigned indignation upon the attempt made by Lord North and his colleagues to find a respectable precedent for their own extravagance and profusion. When defeat, (he said,) and shame, and dismay, pursued them in every quarter,—when their efforts grew weak and languid in proportion as their expenses increased,—they were led by curiosity, as well as by concern, to enquire into the financial history of the past; and they

ascertained to their satisfaction that Mr. Pitt, in the height of the Seven Years' War, had spent almost as much public money as themselves. "It was indecent," cried Fox, "for Ministers to charge the ever memorable Earl of Chatham with the only blemish that can be discovered in his character, without at the same time associating with his extravagance his wisdom, his exertions, and, above all, his success." The speech was crowned with a peroration which, according to the lifelong habit of that most workman-like of debaters, kept the argument continuous and unbroken up to the moment when he resumed his seat. "Do not," he said, "be deterred by the word 'Associations.' There is nothing unconstitutional in the term. With Associations you have it always in your power to maintain the independence in which you were born, and to compel the body whom you have entrusted with your rights to do you justice. Without Associations you must fall a sacrifice to that corruption which has given the Crown an influence unknown to any former period in our history. Permit this influence to be increased, and the country will be enslaved. Destroy it, and the English Constitution will never be overthrown." It was some time, according to the testimony of the reporters, before the necessary silence was recovered "owing to the heartfelt and vehement expression of the audience, quickened and impelled by the powerful eloquence of the gentleman who had just addressed them." When tranquillity was restored Mr. Fox was proposed, and acclaimed, as the Opposition candidate for Westminster; and he signified his acceptance of the offer. If he could have foreseen the troubles and vexations which his connection with that constituency drew down upon him in no distant future even Charles Fox might have thought twice before committing himself to an irrevocable decision.

The growing intensity of political feeling once more brought into prominence an ugly feature in the manners of the day. At ordinary times a large amount of common sense, and good nature, underlay the noise and roughness of our parliamentary proceedings. But none the less a public man was always liable to be involved in a duel; and, in that thorough-going generation, the English duel was not a sham encounter. There is still in existence a most curious list of the fatal casualties that occurred during the war with our revolted Colonies. According to this record, which is drawn up with much care and accuracy, two hundred and forty-seven officers of the Royal army and navy were killed in American battle, and no fewer than twenty-nine in private duel.

Among Lord North's supporters in the House of Commons was a certain William Fullarton, an Ayrshire landed proprietor, who had responded handsomely to the call which the War Office made upon the patriotism of the country after the disaster at Saratoga. He had raised a battalion of infantry at his own expense, and largely from among his own tenants, and had been duly rewarded with a Lieutenant-colonelcy in the regular army. It so happened that the Earl of Shelburne entertained a strong objection, on public grounds, to the practice of conferring high military rank upon untried civilians; and he commented in the House of Lords upon Colonel Fullarton's claims and antecedents in sharp, and, (as it turned out,) in most undeserved terms of depreciation.<sup>1</sup> Conscious of merit, and hot and headstrong by nature, Fullarton brought his personal grievance to the notice of the House of Commons in a speech which violated the most elementary usages of Parliament, and which positively bristled with improprieties of language. Fox called him to order for referring to the Earl of Shelburne by name, and for charging that nobleman with deliberate falsehood. Rigby struck in on the one side, and Colonel Barré, who was quite as far removed from a peacemaker as Rigby, on the other; and the whole chamber was soon in a ferment which called for the intervention of the Prime Minister. North was seen at his very best on such occasions. He complimented Fullarton on his martial spirit, and excused his vehemence; but he strongly recommended his own rule of treating hostile criticisms, uttered in another place, with indifference and disdain. Noble Lords, (said North,) were apt to be extremely personal in their remarks about members of the House of Commons, and some of them had a habit of making very free with himself. An epithet, for instance, had lately been applied to him which he had altogether refused to view as an affront, because a moment's consideration reminded him that a certain Noble Lord, "who had dubbed him 'a thing called a Minister,' would not have the smallest objection to become that very thing himself."

It was impossible to continue wrangling in face of a rebuke sweetened by so much wit, and such good temper. The matter dropped, and the House proceeded to business; but on the following day the entire speech which Fullarton had intended to deliver, but was not permitted to finish, appeared in the columns of the Public Advertiser. Lord Shel-

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Fullarton soon had an opportunity for displaying remarkable military capacity in a campaign against the forces of Hyder Ali, and Tippoo Saib, in the East Indies.



burne's course of action was described in the printed report as mendacious, insolent, and cowardly; and he was openly charged with being in treasonable correspondence with the enemies of his country. Fullarton sent a servant to Shelburne's house with a copy of the newspaper, and a verbal message demanding an immediate answer. London opinion was prepared to condemn and resent an insult offered by a much younger man, of no great mark in the world, to a peer who had been a Secretary of State under Lord Chatham, and who himself belonged to the class from which Prime Ministers are drawn. It was a case where Shelburne need not have allowed himself to be dragooned into a quarrel; but in earlier days he had been a brave soldier who had fought his way, from grade to grade, up to that rank in the army which Fullarton had attained at a single bound; and he had a soldier's feeling about giving and accepting a challenge. Without a moment's hesitation he sent down word to Fullarton's servant that there was no answer, except that he desired his master to meet him in Hyde Park at five o'clock the next morning. Shelburne came attended by Lord Frederick Cavendish, his former brother in arms in the German war; while Fullarton brought with him Lord Balcarres, who, in the final battle on Bemis's Heights, had rivalled Benedict Arnold in courage and conduct. Two shots were exchanged without effect; but at the second fire Fullarton, aiming to kill, wounded his adversary slightly in the groin. Balcarres and Cavendish, who were authoritative judges of what honour required, thereupon insisted that the duel should stop, although Shelburne haughtily and firmly declined to go through the form of a reconciliation.<sup>2</sup>

Lord Shelburne's affair had been preceded by another political duel which was even more sensational, and which came nearer still to a fatal issue. William Adam, like Colonel Fullarton, was a Scotch country gentleman, of Maryburgh, in the County of Kinross. His father was the eldest among those four celebrated brothers who earned the gratitude of their own, and succeeding, generations by their skill and taste in the arts of domestic architecture and ornament. He himself was one of the two members representing the two electors of Gatton, in Surrey. It was a position which allowed him to have a free hand in

<sup>2</sup> Lady Shelburne was in the room when Colonel Fullarton's letter was put into her husband's hands, but she was kept in ignorance of its contents. "She did not," said a newspaper, "know a word of the affair till it was entirely over. It was her brother, the Honourable Mr. Fitzpatrick, who broke it to her. She was expecting." Such was indeed the case. The great Lord Lansdowne, the political patron of Macaulay, and, (in his later life,) of Robert Lowe, was born in the July after the duel.

the House of Commons; and, during the earlier sessions of the existing parliament, he voted frequently against the Ministry. A good fellow as ever breathed, he possessed the same kindly nature as his grandson of the same name,—that Sir William Adam whose patient and disinterested exertions contributed so much to the success of his party in the general election of 1880, and who is still remembered with affection by his surviving associates and opponents.

Earl Russell who, when a student at Edinburgh University, must have known Mr. Adam well, (for that gentleman lived to the age of eighty-seven,) describes him as endowed with an “openness of temper, and cordiality of disposition, which peculiarly suited Mr. Fox.” But the friendship between the two men had a stormy, and most inauspicious, beginning. When Parliament assembled for the Winter Session of November 1779 Ministers were very hard put to it in the debate on the Address; and they were not a little comforted when Mr. Adam announced that it was his intention to desert the Minority, and support the Cabinet. The reasons which he gave for adopting that course were not flattering to either of the two parties. He frankly admitted that the Government had failed miserably; but he confided to the House that, among those gentlemen who stood as candidates for office, he could not single out one by whom the State was likely to be better guided than by its present rulers. He beheld, (he said,) a political phenomenon,—an unsuccessful Ministry, and a discredited Opposition. Fox who, as he well might, resented a speech so insulting to himself and his allies, descended upon Adam with the sweep and force of a tornado. “I do not know,” he exclaimed, “how the Government will receive this awkward and paradoxical tribute; but I know very well what would happen if I myself were a Minister, and if a man were to approach me, and say: ‘Sir, I cannot defend you on the ground of your conduct, which is so replete with absurdities and inconsistencies that all my abilities cannot palliate them. But I will tell you what I can do to serve you. I will inform the world that the men who oppose you are more ignorant, and more inconsistent, than yourself.’ I for my part, on hearing such an address, should instantly reply: ‘Be-gone, wretch, who delightest in libelling mankind, and insulting him, whom you profess to defend, by saying to his face that he certainly is infamous, but there are others more infamous still.’” Nothing, it must be allowed, could less resemble the language which Lord North was in the habit of employing towards members of the Opposition who came to him with a proffer of their support.

Adam was distressed and shocked at being exhibited as a monster of depravity to an amused and excited audience, with no section of which, at that moment, he himself was in political agreement. He called Fox to account in a quiet and dignified letter, and begged him to inform the public, through the press, that he had not meant "to throw any personal reflection upon Mr. Adam." Fox,—who knew that there would be no end to it if he once began apologising, under pressure, to the victims of his rhetoric,—replied that he was unwilling to put anything into the newspapers relating to a speech which, in his view, required no explanation whatever. A meeting in Hyde Park was accordingly arranged for Monday the twenty-ninth of November. The tragical part of the business, in Charles Fox's estimation, was over and done with when he had been successfully extracted from his warm bed by candle-light on a winter's morning. He was accompanied on to the ground by Richard Fitzpatrick; while Adam chose as his second Colonel Humberston, of the family of Seaforth and Mackenzie, who shortly afterwards met his death in the wildest of Mahratta battles. The distance was measured off at fourteen paces. Colonel Fitzpatrick, as in duty bound, instructed his cousin to stand sideways, protecting his exposed flank with his pistol-arm, in the stiff and constrained attitude portrayed in contemporary engravings of famous duels. But Fox would have none of it. He was as thick, (he said,) one way as the other; and he planted himself, full and square, in face of his antagonist. His life, in all human probability, was saved by his careless and offhand courage. When shots had been exchanged, with no result that was visible to Mr. Adam or the two colonels, an attempt was made to reconcile the opponents; but Fox remarked calmly that it was no place for apologies. After Adam had taken one more shot Fox discharged his pistol in the air, and made his peace with a few well-chosen words. Then, but not till then, he told the others that he believed himself to have been wounded at the first fire. He had, in truth, been hit in the very centre of his body. The bullet had struck the buckle of his waist-band,—which, in the case of Charles Fox, was necessarily an article of solid construction,—and had dropped to the ground after inflicting an insignificant, and not very painful, contusion. "Of all duels," wrote Horace Walpole, "this was the most perfect. So much temper, sense, propriety, and natural good nature, on a base of firmness and spirit, never were assembled."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> A brief and precise statement of all that occurred was drawn up for publication, and signed by both of the seconds. Fox, according to oral tradition, told Adam that he

The news of what had taken place in Hyde Park was all over London by breakfast-time. "Half the town was reading the correspondence in Charles Fox's room the whole morning." His innumerable friends had been exceedingly anxious; and for some while to come they were very angry. When Lord Shelburne's duel supervened on the top of Charles Fox's a most unpleasant suspicion began to pervade society. People recalled the bloodthirsty pertinacity with which, in days not very remote, the life of Wilkes was sought by duellists who, in two cases out of three, were Scotchmen.<sup>4</sup> "You have seen," (wrote Horace Walpole,) "Mr. Fox's combat with highwaymen in the papers. At first I concluded they were not highwaymen, but Highlanders, and that Messrs. Adam and Fullarton were ambitious of further preferment." An anonymous journalist, writing with savage irony, pretended to have read a War Office advertisement for a number of marksmen who had been regularly trained, and were sure of hitting within twelve feet distance; "and who may rely upon it that they will not be sent abroad, as they are destined for home service."<sup>5</sup> That imputation was most unjust as regarded Adam; and Fullarton, at the worst, was a quarrelsome man with an exaggerated idea of his own importance.

On the twenty-second of March 1780 Sir James Lowther brought the matter before the House of Commons; and that House has often been invited to consider points of Privilege which concerned it less. "He by no means," (so he assured his hearers,) "wished to put men of spirit into a dishonourable situation. It had been his own misfortune, more than once, to be engaged in a duel; and, whenever he was so called upon, he trusted that he would show himself ready to do what was proper. But he now was speaking as a Member of Parliament, and an advocate for freedom of debate. If free debate were to be interpreted into personal attack, and questions of a public nature were to be decided in private combat, Parliament would soon resemble a Polish Diet." William Adam then rose to his feet. The attention of the House was immediately fixed upon him; and, before he sat down, he had regained the sympathy and good-will of all his parliamentary colleagues. "Amidst the unwelcome sensations," (he said,) "occasioned

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must have loaded with "Government powder," the strength and efficacy of which had recently been impugned in parliamentary debate. But there is no printed or written authority for the story; and it is perhaps too good to be true.

<sup>4</sup> The man who nearly killed Wilkes, in a barbarous and cold-blooded encounter which came little short of an attempt at murder, was probably an Englishman; but he was a dependant of Lord Bute, and an officer in the Princess Dowager's Household.

<sup>5</sup> *London Evening Post* of March 1780.



by the revival of that unfortunate affair in which he himself had been implicated, he found some comfort in the opportunity afforded him of doing justice to the character of his opponent, and of asserting in the hearing of so respectable an assembly that he had found in him a manliness, and an honour, which equalled those transcendant abilities that had won him the admiration of every member of the House, and of none in a more eminent degree than himself." Fox, being what he was, in all likelihood never received a compliment which afforded him more lively pleasure. The Coalition of 1783, which brought ruin and disaster upon so many politicians, proved nothing less than a God-send to William Adam; for it enabled him to reconcile his loyalty towards Lord North with his affection for Charles Fox, whose staunch and devoted adherent he became, and remained, until the death of his beloved chief absolved him from his allegiance.

Fox's speech in Westminster Hall was the crowning event of the agitation in the country; and by that time both Houses were filling up fast after a substantial Christmas holiday which almost everybody had further prolonged on his own account. The honour of opening a parliamentary campaign, marked by striking and diversified turns of fortune, and overcharged with historical interest, was claimed by a man admirably fitted for the responsibility which he had undertaken. The Earl of Shelburne was a statesman endowed with strong character, and rare talents, marred by faults which impaired his usefulness when alive, and which have rendered him vast disservice with posterity. He laboured, and his memory still labours, beneath an imputation of duplicity and disingenuousness for which it is not altogether easy to account. Shelburne's political alliances were seldom long-lived, and a cloud of discomfort and distrust was apt to overspread the serenity of his private friendships. At an age which in modern politics passes for youth he had twice held exalted office, and in both cases his relations with his Cabinet colleagues had begun by being strained, and had ended by being internecine. But the most notable example of his constitutional inability to work harmoniously and amicably with others was still in the future. Those mutual suspicions and jealousies, which smouldered, or blazed up, between Lord Shelburne and Charles Fox while they were Secretaries of State together in Lord Rockingham's second administration, were destined to produce results more important and far-reaching than anything which ever happened, before or since, in the history of British party. Fox's obstinate refusal

to serve under Shelburne, after Rockingham had been removed by death, led to a succession of consequences which altered the whole course of politics, and condemned the Whigs to an all but unbroken half-century of banishment from place and power. It was the fatal and irreparable mistake of Fox's life. A quiet member of the Whig party, who was more concerned about the welfare of his cause than about the ambitions and susceptibilities of his leaders, might have been pardoned for thinking that it would have been no such terrible calamity if either Colonel Fullarton's, or Mr. Adam's, pistol had carried the bullet home.

With all his defects and angularities Lord Shelburne was a public man of the first order, to whose very valuable qualities the world has done scanty justice. He has been cleverly, and not inaptly, described by Mr. Disraeli as one of the suppressed characters of English history. Throughout the entire period covered by the American difficulty Shelburne was a power in the State,—a scourge to the ineptitude, and a spur to the indolence, of its rulers. He had been the most troublesome and restless of bedfellows in office, but the independence and isolation of Opposition were pre-eminently suited to his self-willed and self-reliant nature. His acquaintance with affairs was deep and wide; his judgment was almost unerring; and he never shrank from taking a bold and direct line of his own, which other men, if they chose, were at liberty to follow. Shelburne was actuated by the instinctive patriotism of a genuine aristocrat, who identified himself with the prosperity and honour of a nation in which he held an assured and conspicuous position. He was versed in European diplomacy, and in the military administration of our own, and other, countries; but his special strength lay in a familiar acquaintance with the principles and details of finance. He belonged to that very small class of politicians who refuse to apply two methods, and two measures, to the management of their private property, and to the care which they bestow upon the public income and expenditure. Shelburne was an open-handed giver, and he never failed to maintain the standard of well-ordered splendour in which it became a nobleman to live. But he had a practical and first-hand knowledge of his own affairs. He supervised the control of his estates in England and Ireland, and of his establishments in town and country, on a system of exact and rational economy; and he put in practice the same system, and no other, when dealing with the pecuniary interests of the nation. "He retained," we are told, "three or four clerks in constant pay and employment under his own roof, who were

solely occupied in copying State papers and accounts;" and he had at his elbow no less capable an adviser than Doctor Richard Price, who was among the best informed, and most sober-minded, political economists of the age.

On the eighth of February 1780 Shelburne moved for the appointment of a Committee consisting of members of both Houses who possessed neither employment nor pension, to examine without delay into the Public Expenditure, and the mode of accounting for the same; to report upon the manner of making Government contracts; and to consider the expediency of abolishing all offices, old and new, which had no duties attached to them, of curtailing exorbitant salaries, and of applying the money thereby saved "to lessen the present ruinous expenditure, and carry on the present war against the House of Bourbon." The words of the Resolution had the true ring about them; and the orator,—for, when he had his heart in the matter, a genuine orator Shelburne was,—explained his proposal to the House of Lords in a speech of considerable but not superfluous length, and of exceptional knowledge and power. He understood his subject, and he thoroughly knew his audience. He did not even attempt to convince those among his hearers who made a trade of politics. Ignoring the whole flock of Court officials, and holders and expectants of sinecures and pensions, and Barons desirous of being made Viscounts, and Bishops on the watch for a chance of being translated, he addressed his arguments to those independent noblemen who attended Parliament, not for the purpose of pushing their own fortunes, but in the hope of doing something towards saving the nation from imminent disaster, and only too probable ruin. Close and eager attention was paid to his searching analysis of the fiscal situation in its bearing upon the future of the landed interest. Shelburne gave it as his opinion that the country gentlemen of England would never have sanctioned the American policy of the Ministry if they could have foreseen that they were committing the British Treasury to an expenditure which would eventually lead to the mortgaging of their own estates in perpetuity; inasmuch as it was upon them, and upon their heirs after them, that, in one shape or another, the burden of taxation must ultimately lie. His Majesty's Government, (he said,) was now fighting four simultaneous wars on borrowed money. Every successive twelvemonth was more costly, and every successive loan was made on worse terms, than the last; and nothing could in the end avert an overwhelming financial calamity except a general peace, "of which, (he greatly feared,) there was not

the most distant prospect." This gloomy anticipation was corroborated by "an affirmative and significant nod" from Lord Sandwich, who was seated on the front bench opposite with a score of proxies in his pocket; and it was a piece of by-play which did not fail to impress the House. What remained of the debate added little to the effect of Shelburne's speech, and detracted nothing from it. When the question was put to the vote his Resolution was supported by twenty Earls and Marquises, and eight Dukes, although Earls and Dukes were less plentiful then than now.

The Opposition lords,—encouraged by the adhesion of some among their brother peers who hitherto had been supporters, or even members, of the Government,—had done their duty well and manfully. They had protested, as citizens, against a policy by the consequences of which they were at least as gravely affected as any other class of Englishmen. But the House of Commons was the special and ordained arena for financial debate; and the self-appointed champion of the nation's financial interests, whose hands the County petitions had been designed to strengthen, sat, and to the end of his career continued to sit, in that assembly. On the eleventh of February 1780, before an overflowing and profoundly attentive audience, Mr. Burke unfolded his Plan for the better Security of the Independence of Parliament, and the Economical Reformation of the Civil and other Establishments. That plan was embodied in five separate Bills, which their author explained in an oration of the length demanded by the importance and complexity of his subject. It was a plan, (to use his own stately words,) laid not in official formality, nor in airy speculation, but in real life, and in human nature. It was a plan which weakened no function of Government, but on the contrary gave it greater vigour. It provided the Minister of Finance with the means of orderly method and comprehensive foresight. It extinguished secret corruption almost to the impossibility of its existence. It destroyed "direct and visible influence equal to the offices of at least fifty members of Parliament; and, lastly, it secured that the provision made by the nation for the comfort and dignity of His Majesty, and His Majesty's family, should not be diverted to the political purposes of the Minister. These," said Burke, "are the points on which I rely for the merit of the plan. I pursue economy in a secondary view, and only as it is connected with these great objects." Burke, nevertheless, confidently promised that his scheme of retrenchment would restore to the public Exchequer, in hard cash, a sum of between two and three hundred thousand pounds a year; while



the system of account and control which he proposed to institute would be in itself, to all future time, "a great revenue." During the last years of peace, which immediately preceded the American rebellion, the expenditure of the country, exclusive of the interest on the Debt, had stood somewhere near the figure of five millions annually. A proportional reduction from the so-called peace budgets of our own day,—if another Edmund Burke were to arise in the present House of Commons,—might fairly be computed at seven millions a year; and seven millions a year would be no contemptible saving.

Burke's speech, like his speech on the Conciliation of America, has taken rank in our national literature on a level with Bacon's Essays, and Milton's *Areopagitica*, and the first quarto volume of Gibbon's *History*. No oration, however skilfully edited and corrected, can please and satisfy a reader if it failed to delight and impress the hearers who were present at its delivery; and the reception accorded to Edmund Burke's exposition of his plan of Economical Reform was of a nature which left him nothing to desire. An immense crowd of members sat and stood, listening, and learning, and enjoying while he rolled out his vivid and picturesque, but most accurate and businesslike, catalogue of financial abuses, and while he descanted upon their intimate relation to the good fame and efficiency of Parliament. He earnestly besought the House to adopt a self-denying ordinance on an extensive scale; to abolish unearned, and to dock half-earned, salaries and pensions; and thereby to withdraw from all Cabinets, then and afterwards, the material means of corruption and illegitimate influence. That, in Burke's view, was the only course of action which could re-establish Parliament in the esteem and confidence of the nation. It was idle, (he said,) to complain of the language which had been used at some of the County meetings. "We are told that the petitioners were violent. Be it so. Those who are least anxious about your conduct are not those who love you the most. We have furnished to the people of England,—indeed we have,—some real cause for jealousy. Let us free ourselves at once from everything that can increase their suspicions, and inflame their just resentment. Let the Commons in Parliament assembled be one and the same thing with the Commons at large. Then indeed shall we be truly great. Respecting ourselves, we shall be respected by the world."

After holding his audience during more than three hours he wound up what he had to say with a few unadorned sentences, pitched in a quiet strain; and, when Edmund Burke spoke calmly and simply un-

der the stress of deep emotion, his words always possessed a strange and mysterious charm. The House remained spell-bound. Fox took off his hat to second the motion. North, embarrassed, and a great deal more than half-convinced, stated it as his belief that no other gentleman could have been equal to the task so ably performed by the Honourable Member, "although he had the happiness to know that there were many then present who had very brilliant parts." For himself, he certainly should not hinder the bringing in of the first among the five Bills; but he expressly reserved his liberty to oppose it at one or another of its subsequent stages. Lord George Gordon, the vainest of fools, who had all the will in the world to be mischievous, thought fit to attack Burke's speech as unconstitutional. He saw most plainly, (so he declared,) that the whole business was a juggle concerted between the worthy Member for Bristol, and the noble Lord in the blue ribbon at the head of the Government; and, to the disgust of all his colleagues, he insisted on challenging a vote. The Noes were ordered to keep their seats; while the crowd of Ayes,—according to the clumsy arrangement for taking a division which prevailed then, and for more than fifty years afterwards,—packed themselves with difficulty into the dark and comfortless Lobby. Lord George who, to the credit of Parliament, could not secure a teller, remained behind in the solitude of an empty House. Burke's speech was printed and published, and ran through several editions. There is agreeable testimony to the effect which it produced upon a mind that was well worth convincing. William Cowper had recently been engaged upon a rhymed piece of political satire, one stanza of which, neither better nor worse than the rest of the poem, was evidently directed against Edmund Burke. Towards the end of February Cowper despatched to his friend William Unwin a letter which contained the following passage. "When I wrote last I was a little inclined to send you a copy of verses entitled 'The Modern Patriot,' but was not quite pleased with a line or two, which I found it difficult to mend. At night I read Mr. Burke's speech in the newspaper, and was so well pleased with his proposals for a reformation, and with the temper in which he made them, that I began to think better of his cause, and burnt my verses."

Burke's oration was an arsenal of facts and statistics which provided his followers with an abundant store of weapons for waging as hot a parliamentary campaign as ever was fought between two hosts of combatants not unequally matched in number; for the Ministerial majority, which had stood at two hundred in the first Session of the

existing Parliament, had by this time as good as disappeared. A few days afterwards Sir George Savile moved for an account of all Patent Places for life, or lives, and for the salaries and fees thereto attached; as well as of all pensions granted by the Crown, specifying the amount of such pensions, and the times when, and the persons to whom, they had been granted. It was notorious that such a Return would have disclosed the names of many Peers and Commoners, and the female relatives of many others, who were gratified by quarterly doles of money which might at any moment be withdrawn at the pleasure of the Sovereign. Lord Nugent, as spokesman for the Ministry, resisted the motion on the ground of delicacy; and in the course of two long discussions no more plausible argument could be discovered for withholding information which Parliament was indubitably entitled to receive. "There were," said Lord Nugent, "many Lady Bridgets, Lady Marys, and Lady Jennies, who would be much hurt at having their names entered in the proceedings of that House as pensioners of State." Lord Nugent's appeal was received with derision, and the general feeling was such that Lord North found himself obliged to come in person to the rescue. He interposed an amendment limiting the scope, while it did not directly traverse the substance, of Savile's Resolution; but all the authority of the Prime Minister, together with a speech of marvellous wit and fire from Mr. Attorney General Wedderburn, were required in order to save the Government from disaster by a majority of two votes in a House of three hundred and eighty members. Those figures indicated a sudden and significant displacement of the political balance.

There was another class of people who were more unpopular even than the pensioners and sinecurists. Government contractors,—with their brand-new wealth, and their privileged opportunities for facile, and in many cases ill-gotten, gains,—had no friends in any quarter; and the most disliked and suspected among them were those who had seats in the House of Commons. For the contractor, on the one hand, was bound to obey the Minister for fear of losing his contract; while the Minister submitted to the exactions, and winked at the peculations, of the contractor for fear of losing a vote. Honest senators, without distinction of party, were resolutely determined to do away with an abuse which was incompatible with effective administrative control, and a stain upon the honour of Parliament. A Bill for Restraining any Member of the House of Commons from being concerned in any Government Contract, "unless the said Contract had been made at a public

bidding," was carried rapidly, silently, and unanimously through all its stages; and Lord North recognised that it would be highly imprudent to court rebuff in a Chamber where he felt that power was slipping from him. The Contractors Bill went up to the House of Lords; and the Ministers, with much ado, and some scandal, contrived to defeat it in that smaller and more manageable assembly.

Burke had seldom been heard to greater advantage than during the debates on the separate provisions of his Bill for the better Regulation of His Majesty's Civil Establishments. On the thirteenth of March the Committee reached a Clause dealing with the Lords of Trade, who were eight in number, all of them with seats in Parliament, and each of them drawing a salary of a thousand pounds a year. There was a tradition of long standing that the claims of literature were not to be neglected in making appointments to the Board of Trade. Locke had sat there, and Addison, and Prior,—and Charles Townshend, whose vivacious drollery had never been more unbridled than when he was enlarging on the farcical character of his duties as a Commissioner of Trade and Plantations. Lord North, to do him justice, had placed upon the Board as presentable a show of authors as he could find in the ranks of his parliamentary supporters. The patriarch among them was Mr. Soame Jenyns, who was almost co-æval with the century. He had written much in prose and verse; but he is chiefly known by the title, rather than by the contents, of his principal work, "A Free Enquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil." Among the other Commissioners was Lord Carlisle, the smallest of poets, or poetasters; Mr. William Eden, whose qualification to be classed as a literary man consisted in certain "Letters on Public Affairs," in defence of the Government, which were addressed to Lord Carlisle; and Edward Gibbon, whose nomination as a Lord of Trade did something to excuse and dignify the most flagrant and grotesque of existing jobs.<sup>6</sup> Burke approached the subject in a spirit of high comedy. He professed a desire to rescue a company of eminent writers from dry and irksome functions which distracted them from loftier studies, and more congenial labours. As an Academy of *Belles Lettres*, (he said,) he held them hallowed. As a Board of Trade he wished to abolish them. That Board, to his view, was a crow's nest in which nightingales were kept prisoners: and his

<sup>6</sup> "The fancy of a hostile orator," said Gibbon, "may paint in the strong colours of ridicule 'the perpetual adjournments, and the unbroken vacation,' of the Board of Trade. But it must be allowed that our duty was not intolerably severe, and that I enjoyed many days, and weeks, of repose without being called away from my library to the office."



design was to restore the nightingales to their liberty in the hope that they might sing the more delightfully. Aroused by the sympathy and applause of his audience, which has often inspired lesser men, Burke positively revelled in the freedom and licence of Committee. He spoke as often as he chose, and each successive apologist for the Board of Trade was overwhelmed by the exuberance of his diction and imagination, and by the irresistible play of his satire. "I can never," (so Gibbon confessed,) "forget the delight with which that diffusive and ingenious orator was heard by all sides of the House, and even by those whose existence he proscribed. The Lords of Trade blushed at their own insignificance; and Mr. Eden's appeal to the two thousand five hundred volumes of our Reports served only to excite a general laugh." At a quarter past two in the morning the Committee at length divided, and voted for abolishing the Board by two hundred and seven as against a hundred and ninety-nine.

Burke had exhorted men of all parties to lay aside their differences, and address themselves in common to the salutary work of lightening the burden of taxation, and restoring the purity of the national senate; and he had met with a response which surprised himself, and the statesmen with whom he acted. A change had come over the surface of politics which indicated that the public mind was stirred by an under-current of deep and sincere conviction. The leaders of the Opposition could henceforward rely upon the unbounded enthusiasm of their habitual followers, and they might likewise count on the support of a large contingent of new allies. Encouraged by success, they determined to push the great controversy of their generation towards a decisive issue. Hitherto they had been engaged in storming the outworks, and they now proceeded to attack the citadel itself. The moment was ripe, in their opinion, for eliciting from the House of Commons a solemn protest against the encroachments of royal influence upon the accepted theory, and the long-established working, of the Constitution. John Dunning, the first of living advocates, was entrusted with the conduct of the business; and it could not have been placed in more appropriate hands. He had made his way into the front rank of his profession through a course of that poverty and hardship to which strong men, who have succeeded in life, look back with honourable pride and satisfaction. The Earl of Chatham, who did not love gentlemen of the long robe, had declared that Dunning was something very superior to a mere lawyer, although at the same time his legal knowledge was

such that he was "the law itself." Chatham made him his Solicitor General; and, after Chatham had gone into retirement, and his Ministry,—ostensibly led by the Duke of Grafton, but in reality impelled and guided by the more unscrupulous of the Bedford party,—had embarked upon a violent and unconstitutional policy, Dunning found himself altogether out of sympathy with his colleagues. He returned to his private practice at the Bar, where he thenceforward maintained a pre-eminence, both at Equity and Common Law, which no one presumed, or, (such was the respect felt for his character and his attainments,) even desired to dispute. George the Third's dislike of him was notorious; and no Minister, of the moral type which under that monarch was the indispensable qualification for office, ventured so much as to suggest that John Dunning ought in justice and decency to be made a King's Counsel. And so, for twelve years to come, there was witnessed the unusual spectacle of a barrister who, but for his own scruples, might long ago have been Lord Chancellor, pleading in a stuff gown before the tribunal of England's greatest Judge; and Lord Mansfield honoured Dunning with a deference and consideration which reflected even greater honour upon Lord Mansfield himself. Dunning, throughout all those years, held a commanding position in Parliament, where he sat for the borough of Calne, free from trouble, anxiety, and expense, with Barré for his colleague; for Lord Shelburne, like his son and grandson after him, made a discriminating use of his electoral influence.

On the sixth of April 1780 the House of Commons resolved itself into a Committee to consider the Petitions from the County Meetings, and Dunning took that opportunity for bringing forward two stringent Resolutions aimed against the excessive power of the Court. The debate which ensued was signalised by no very rare display of eloquence; but it was rendered memorable by the supreme importance of the topic, and by the succession of extraordinary incidents which occurred in a House packed to suffocation, and boiling over with excitement. Dunning's speech, plain-spoken and powerfully argued, wrought an effect upon his hearers which obviously and imperatively necessitated an immediate reply from a responsible Minister; but the oratorical resources possessed by the Government for meeting such an emergency had by this time fallen very low indeed. When the House of Commons wanted persuading and convincing it was utterly useless to put up either Rigby or Lord George Germaine. Welbore Ellis was a non-entity; and, though Dundas and Wedderburn were both of them

admirable debaters, they were more esteemed for their talents than for their character. Moreover they were Crown Lawyers; and the country gentlemen of those days preferred to be told what they ought to do by one of themselves. There remained the Earl of Nugent, a Vice Treasurer of Ireland, who more than once had been selected to defend the Ministry during those critical discussions upon Economical Reform. Nugent was a jolly, rollicking Irishman, very rich indeed in acres and money, who had made the most of a world which liked him rather more than it respected him.<sup>7</sup> He spoke well, as such men speak; and his speeches are still readable, if it were only for the sake of the flashes of indiscretion by which, at one point or another of their progress, they were pretty sure to be enlivened. In his reply to Dunning Nugent contrived to hit upon an argument which convulsed the House with wonder and amusement. "Could any gentleman," (he demanded,) "lay his hand upon his heart, and declare that this was peculiarly the time which called for the diminution of the influence of the Crown? America was lost. He would speak out. He was willing to repeat his words. He feared that America was irretrievably lost. The American war had proved a wrong measure. He himself had supported the war, and he was not ashamed to own that he had been in the wrong. But after a series of failures, and disappointments, and untoward accidents, followed by a war with France, and closely followed again by a war with Spain, with great loans, and heavy taxes, to contend that the influence of the Crown ought to be diminished was, in his opinion, to the last degree preposterous." Any one who has sat in the House of Commons may imagine for himself the chorus of ironical cheering with which each sentence of this blundering confession on the part of a Minister was greeted from the Opposition benches, and not from the Opposition benches only.

Lord Nugent had given away the case for the Government; and worse was still to follow. Some weeks previously a fierce quarrel had arisen between Lord North, and the Speaker of the House of Commons, over an obscure and rather painful question of personal interests.<sup>8</sup> During the Committee on Dunning's Resolutions Sir Fletcher Norton remained seated on a bench near the Chair as a private mem-

<sup>7</sup> Lord Nugent has won for himself a cheerful memory in literature as the donor of the Haunch of Venison which suggested Goldsmith's inimitable poem.

<sup>8</sup> *Parliamentary History*; XXI, 258-277. The part played by Fox upon this occasion was an instance of his skill in the management,—or, to speak more truly, the creation,—of a parliamentary opportunity.

ber. Long observation had taught him to read the pulse of the House; and he felt that an opportunity had at last arrived for paying off his arrear of grudges against the Cabinet and the Court. Rising in his place he began with what the Ministry might well regard as an hypocritical expression of reluctance to take sides in a party controversy. But he soon warmed to his work; and, at the close of a slashing speech in favour of the motion, he wound up by declaring that the people of England, "in their constituent and collective capacity," had a full right to petition the House, and were entitled to redress if they put forward their grievances in a peaceable and constitutional manner. "The Committee," he said, "must either agree with the Resolution, or at once reject the petitions; and, if there were any gentlemen present who felt themselves moved to adopt the latter course, he wished them joy in going down to their Constituents after having voted the allegations made by many thousands of the people of England to be false and ill-founded." The intervention of the Speaker was not to the taste of fair-minded men; but his bellicose and dictatorial language intimidated waverers into voting against the Government, and removed all sense of restraint from the younger hot-heads of the Opposition.

When it came to the Prime Minister's turn to speak he was no longer in his usual placid temper. He had suffered much while he was being attacked by Sir Fletcher Norton, and still more while he was being defended by Lord Nugent; he scented defeat in the air; and he looked forward to a very unpleasant interview with his royal master at an early hour on the morrow. He lost command of himself, and did not succeed in maintaining his hold upon that crowded and turbulent assembly. Lord North was betrayed by an access of vexation into asking whether he was justly chargeable as the author of the national misfortunes, "whereupon many gentlemen cried across the House, 'You are! You are!'" The worst moment of a bad half-hour was when he upbraided the Opposition with pursuing measures likely to overturn the Constitution. He was called to order angrily and vociferously, and a number of members demanded that the Prime Minister's words should be taken down by the Clerk at the Table. The Lord Advocate, coming to the assistance of his leader, proposed an insignificant amendment on Dunning's first Resolution, in the double hope of confusing the issue, and of prolonging the discussion on the chance that something might be gained by delay.<sup>9</sup> Dundas was a

<sup>9</sup> *Parliamentary History*; XXI, 366. *The Lord Advocates of Scotland*, by George W. T. Omond; Volume II, page 99.



master of parliamentary wiles, but he had to reckon with a more consummate tactician than himself; for Charles Fox instantly rose to his feet, and accepted the amendment with ominous alacrity. The Government had no choice but to proceed forthwith to a division; and a motion, couched in the words "That it is necessary to declare that the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished," was carried by two hundred and thirty-three votes to two hundred and fifteen. From that day forward the terms of Dunning's Resolution became a catchword in politics. Such a string of telling phrases never again captivated the fancy of the public until, in the Reform agitation of 1832, the country resounded to the cry of "The Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill." The Government were supported by twenty-seven members for Cornish boroughs, and twenty-seven of the sham representatives for Scotland; while the majority contained only five of the one class, and six of the other. Above sixty English county members voted for the Resolution, and eight against it. There spoke the free voice of the true England.<sup>10</sup>

Dunning's Resolution ranks in importance with the Petition of Rights, and the Declaration of Right, as an expression of the national opinion on the most vital of all constitutional questions; for it laid down the principle that the country should be ruled by Ministers who, —like Pitt, and Peel, and Palmerston and Gladstone,—depended, not on the favour of the Sovereign, but on the confidence of an unbought and unbribed Parliament. It was the death-wound of Personal Government, which thenceforward floundered and struggled helplessly until, after no long while, it perished and disappeared. Personal Government had endured for nearly twenty years, and had left a record as turbid and barren as any equal period in our history. There had been a protracted dearth of useful and beneficent legislation, while the attention of King George and his Ministers had been absorbed in the conduct of two undertakings the first of which had ended in ridiculous, and the second in ruinous, failure. They had brought the country to the brink of revolution in order to keep Wilkes out of Parliament: and now for six years past, Wilkes had been seated in Par-

<sup>10</sup> Parodies on Dunning's Resolution, for a long time to come, were very fashionable in the newspapers. "That Lord George Gordon has been cracked, is cracked, and ought not to be allowed to go about." "That General Conway has been a trimmer, is a trimmer, and ought to be trimmed." More than thirteen years afterwards poor Gibbon, jesting to the last, wrote to his friend Lord Sheffield that the cruel ailment, which was very soon to kill him, "had most stupendously increased, was increasing, and ought to be diminished."

liament securely and comfortably, enjoying a high popularity among his brother members, and occupying as a debater very much more than his due share of the public time. Such had been the issue of the contest over the Middlesex Election; and not less nugatory, and far more disastrous, was the attempt made by the King and the Cabinet to enforce their colonial policy upon the people of America. Already, ten months previously to the date of Dunning's Resolution, George the Third himself had admitted, in a confidential letter to the Prime Minister, that any man who alleged the Tea Duty to be worth all the evils which had arisen from it "was more fit for Bedlam than for a seat in the Senate." That conclusion was exactly what Burke and Fox, before ever the American rebellion broke out, had tried to impress upon Parliament in the plainest of plain language.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *George the Third to Lord North*; Kew, June 11, 1779.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE GORDON RIOTS. THE GENERAL ELECTION

THE Spring session of the year 1780 was “a session in which unexpected victories, and unaccountable defeats, alternately raised and sank the hopes of the contending parties from the highest pitch of exultation to the lowest state of despondency. The point of decision seemed more than once quivering, and hanging only by a hair.”<sup>1</sup> Those are the words of a contemporary historian; and never was a more faithful description written. The Opposition leaders had hitherto been carried forward by a rush of headlong success; and they now were destined to experience the bitterness of unforeseen and,—for anything that appeared on the surface,—quite inexplicable repulses and misadventures.

On the fourteenth of April Sir Fletcher Norton informed Parliament that he had long been unwell, and that his health had at last entirely given way. He treated his hearers to a long narrative of his various maladies with a minuteness of detail testifying to the interest felt by an eighteenth century House of Commons in all that related to the symptoms of gout. The King believed him to be malingering. “I have not,” said His Majesty, “the smallest doubt that the Speaker has pleaded illness to enable the Opposition to pursue their amusement at Newmarket next week.” But Sir Fletcher Norton most assuredly was not shamming, inasmuch as his enforced absence from the Chair, (and well he knew it,) was the salvation of a Government which he cordially detested. “Nothing,” it was said, “ever happened more fortunately for any Administration than the illness, at this peculiar juncture, of the Speaker of the House of Commons.” Lord North proposed and carried an adjournment over the next ten days, and dur-

<sup>1</sup> *History of Europe in the Annual Register for 1780; towards the end of chapter 8.*

ing all that interval of time the subterranean operations of Mr. John Robinson, the Patronage Secretary of the Treasury, were pursued with a skill and an industry the results of which soon became evident. When the House re-assembled Dunning moved an Address praying that His Majesty would be graciously pleased not to prorogue the parliament until proper measures had been taken to correct the abuses complained of by the petitions of the people; and that motion was rejected by a majority of fifty votes in a House so large that the most sanguine opponent of the Ministry could not blind himself to the conviction that it must be regarded as a test division.

Charles Fox, beside himself with astonishment and vexation, poured forth, in an assembly seething with excitement little short of fury, a flood of declamation which has been described as "the keenest Philippic" that perhaps ever was spoken within those walls. "Philippic" was the right term to use, for no passage in the Second Oration against Antony exceeded in vehemence and pungency the ironical compliments which Fox paid to the habitual followers of the Government, and his crushing denunciations of those fickle senators who had supported Dunning on the first occasion, and has opposed him on the next. Fox exclaimed that he had no quarrel whatever with the two hundred and fifteen gentlemen who, on the sixth of the month, voted that the influence of the Crown had not increased, and ought not therefore to be diminished. *Their* conduct, (he said,) was open and direct, and all of a piece from first to last. They had sold themselves for office; but, base as the tenure of their places was, they had one virtue on which to pride themselves,—that of fidelity, gratitude, and consistency. To all their other demerits they had not added the absurdity and treachery of one day resolving an opinion to be true, and the next day of declaring it to be a falsehood. They had not taken in their patron, or their friends, with false hopes and delusive promises. But when he contemplated another set of men who sat upon the benches around him, (and he was sorry for it,)—men who voted first one way, and then another,—he was at a loss for words to convey the sentiment with which he viewed them. Nevertheless, before Charles Fox finally resumed his seat, he had contrived to discover language strong enough to express his feelings; and he wound up the fourth speech he made on that afternoon and evening by telling those gentlemen that their conduct "amounted to desertion and abandonment of their declared principles, and of their solemn promises plighted in that House to their constituents, and to the people at large; con-



duct which, when considered in that light, was scandalous, base, treacherous, shameful, and disgraceful." That fierce invective, delivered under the impulse of passion, and on the spur of the moment, was the eloquent objurgation of an angry orator rather than the grave and measured rebuke which should have issued from the lips of a responsible party leader. But there are few men of ardent genius, and masterful nature, who can take a terrible disappointment lightly at the age of one-and-thirty; and Charles Fox was not among them.

The King had been annoyed, and alarmed, as much as so very resolute a monarch was capable of alarm, by the signs of disaffection which showed themselves in the Government ranks during the first eight or nine weeks of the session. He told Lord North, in manly and dignified words, that Dunning's Resolutions were aimed at some one more exalted than the Prime Minister. "I wish," he remarked, "that I did not feel at whom they are personally levelled." He put on record his surprise that men "should so far lose their reason" as to attack the constitution of the Board of Trade; and he signified his grave displeasure at the miserable majority which had barely saved the Crown Pensioners from exposure to the comments of newspapers, and the resentment of the taxpayer. He reminded his Minister of the determined attitude, and the drastic remedies, by which, sixteen years before, at the height of the Wilkes controversy, Mr. Grenville had brought a mutinous House of Commons to reason over the question of General Warrants. Lord North, (said His Majesty,) would have done well to imitate that loyal and courageous example. On another occasion, when the Government had been beaten by two hundred and fifteen votes to two hundred and thirteen, the King sat down to his desk before breakfast next morning in order to express his dissatisfaction with those five gentlemen of the Ministerial party who had reached the House of Commons just too late for the division. George the Third, like Charles the First, had his question of The Five Members to settle. His method of dealing with it, though less sensational, was much more effective than that adopted by his predecessor; and, before the end of April, he was once more in secure command of a parliamentary majority.

The weight of the royal hand was felt in the Lobby of the House of Commons. The reaction set in, and all through May it waxed stronger every week. Lord North easily defeated a proposal brought forward by General Conway for Quieting the Troubles in America. Burke was repeatedly out-voted in Committee, until, on the eighteenth

of the month, he withdrew his Bill for the Reformation of the Civil Establishments with a few melancholy sentences of resignation and despair. The King watched with grim approval the discomfiture of his political adversaries; but he never forgave, and never again trusted, a House of Commons which had been guilty of passing a Resolution reflecting upon the increased power of the Crown. That House had got out of control once, and might at any moment get out of control again. King George was in a hurry to see the last of the existing Parliament; and he was sanguine enough to hope better things from its successor. "If," he wrote, "I had the power of oratory of Demosthenes, or the pen of an Addison, I could not say more on the subject than what I can convey in the following few lines. I am conscious that, if Lord North will resolve with spirit to continue in his present employment, with the assistance of a New Parliament I shall be able to keep the present constitution in its pristine lustre."<sup>2</sup> His Majesty was determined to proclaim a Dissolution at the earliest convenient opportunity; and that opportunity suddenly presented itself in a strange shape, and from an altogether unlooked-for quarter. Events of startling, and even appalling, character swept like a whirlwind over the face of party politics at home, and diverted public attention, for the time being, from the perils of colonial rebellion and foreign war.

Very grave consequences arose from the vacillation displayed by Lord North's Government with regard to the Roman Catholic Relief Act of the year 1778. That great and just law had a transient moment of apparent popularity, during which the Cabinet laid claim to a full share in the credit of the measure. Dundas, the Lord Advocate for Scotland, speaking on behalf of Ministers in the House of Commons, made a voluntary promise to extend the benefits of toleration beyond the Border by repealing those penal Statutes which were still in force against the Roman Catholics of Scotland. A motion disapproving of the proposed change in the law was brought forward in the General Assembly of the Scotch Church; but it was vigorously opposed by Doctor William Robertson, the celebrated historian, and was defeated by a substantial majority. That vote was the high-water mark of religious tolerance in the region north of Tweed. An Association of people who styled themselves The Friends of the Protestant Interest lost not a moment in setting on foot a fiery agitation against the project for "granting to Roman Catholics the privilege of purchasing, and succeeding to, landed property." The Edinburgh populace, the most formi-

<sup>2</sup> George the Third to Lord North; May 19, 1780.

dable of all mobs, was invited to outrage and disorder by a handbill artfully composed, and printed and distributed with an attention to the dictates of economy which had a flavour of North British thriftiness.<sup>3</sup> A tumult arose at the appointed place and hour. A Roman Catholic chapel was demolished; a house, in which the priest occupied a flat, was plundered, and burned to the ground; and the military authorities were only just in time to preserve Principal Robertson's dwelling from the same fate.<sup>4</sup>

The effect upon the nerves of Lord North and his brother Ministers was instantaneous. These rulers, who had committed the British nation to another Seven Years' War in order to punish a riot on the Quayside at Boston, surrendered what they had solemnly declared to be their convictions and intentions at the first breath of sedition in the streets of Edinburgh; and Dundas was commissioned to announce in Parliament that all attempts to procure an Act in favour of Scotch Roman Catholics would be laid aside "until time, and cool persuasion, should remove the unhappy prejudices" entertained towards them by their Protestant fellow-countrymen.<sup>5</sup> This abandonment of principle, at the bidding of violence, was the signal for an outburst of fanaticism all the island over. The responsible government had deserted its post, and the rabble of bigotry poured unopposed through the breach. Protestant Associations were formed in town and country; and a petition for the revocation of the Savile Act was circulated through England, and signed with tens of thousands of real, and imaginary, names. The centre of the movement was soon transferred from the committee-room, and the pulpit, to the gin-shop and the tavern; and money was freely spent on inflaming the evil passions of the vulgar by methods

<sup>3</sup> "Please to read this carefully, keep it clean, and drop it somewhere else." That was the postscript appended to the hand-bill.

<sup>4</sup> Doctor Robertson, all through his life, gave frequent proofs of his breadth of mind, and his indomitable combativeness. In 1745, at the age of four-and-twenty, he left his first Manse to fight the Pretender. General Cope refused to admit him and his parishioners into the ranks, on the ground that they were "too undisciplined;"—although it is not easy to see how, at the very worst, they could have run away faster than the rest of General Cope's army. When the Reverend John Home produced his tragedy of Douglas, Robertson led the minority of eleven to two hundred which protested against the condemnation levelled by the Church of Scotland at a clergyman who had written for the stage. But perhaps the most striking instance of the Doctor's courage was the letter in which,—when he was Principal of Edinburgh University, and Moderator of the General Assembly,—he assured Gibbon of his admiration for *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and his hope that the volume, in spite of the outcry raised against it in clerical quarters, would be as widely read as it deserved.

<sup>5</sup> *Parliamentary History*, XIX, 1142; XX, 280.

which had little in common with honourable politics, and still less with Christianity. Then the King's Ministers saw their opportunity, and, regardless of consistency, and defiant of ordinary decency, they took steps to encourage the spread of religious hatred, and turn it to their own advantage. The word was passed round; and for many months afterwards, until a general election had come and gone, the subsidised Government journals were employed in writing down the statesmen of the Opposition as allies and accomplices of the Papacy. "How generous it is of the Ministry," (so Fox complained to Edmund Burke,) "to publish hand-bills, and fill their papers with abuse of me on this popery-subject, I leave it for them to consider. Since I began my letter I have laid my hand on one of the hand-bills, and inclose it to you; though, God knows, it is not worth the groat you will have to pay for it."

That was an unworthy proceeding on the part of an English Ministry. The sequel was not slow in coming. On the second of June 1780 a vast procession, marshalled and headed by Lord George Gordon, carried the monster petition to Westminster, where the Houses were beset by a mischievous and ferocious crowd, containing, as the day wore on, an ever smaller proportion of good Protestants, and a larger contingent of extremely bad citizens. Commoners, and peers, and more particularly bishops, who had shown favour to the Catholic claims, were brutally assaulted on the way to their duties, and some of them narrowly escaped being torn in pieces. Then began the last Reign of Terror which London ever witnessed. That city had seen one such night on the eleventh of December 1688, after the news got abroad that King James had fled; but in June 1780 there was a full week of licence and disorder. The places of worship of the obnoxious creed, including the private chapels of foreign ambassadors, were sacked and destroyed with every circumstance of insult and impiety. The homes of Roman Catholic noblemen, gentlemen, and merchants were invaded, and their living rooms, and store-rooms, and, (before everything else,) their cellars, were searched and gutted;—an expressive phrase which was supposed to have come into familiar use during that dreadful week, although it had been employed in literature, three generations back, by no less a master of English than John Dryden.<sup>6</sup> The warehouses of a Roman Catholic distiller, who manufactured on an extensive scale, were emptied of their contents; and the street was

<sup>6</sup> "A troop of cut-throat guards were sent to seize  
The rich men's goods, and gut their palaces."



flooded with raw spirits, which were swallowed with maddening, and in many cases fatal, effects by a multitude of wretches whose frenzy did not require the aid of stimulants. The Bank of England was twice attacked, and only rescued from pillage by sharp fighting. The prisons were stormed and wrecked, and their inmates set at liberty as a reinforcement to the army of disorder. Shops were closed, and markets vacated and silent; and prudent householders chalked up "No Popery" on their shutters, and walked abroad with the Protestant colours in their hats,—bedizened, (said Horace Walpole,) "with blue ribbons like a May-day garland."

The vengeance of the lawless fell with severity upon those members of the community who came forward in defence of the law; whether they were upright and intrepid judges like Lord Mansfield; or stipendiary magistrates, like Sir John Fielding, brave enough to keep their Courts open for the summary trial of offenders; or honest tradesmen who had ventured to give evidence against depredators and incendiaries. The menace of the insurrection was especially directed against the statesmen of the Opposition, whom ignorant and credulous people had been taught to regard as so many Popish conspirators. The great Whig mansions were barricaded and loopholed, and defended by armed retainers, and serjeants' parties of regular infantry. "For four nights," said Edmund Burke, "I kept watch at Lord Rockingham's, or Sir George Savile's, whose houses were garrisoned by a strong body of soldiers, together with numbers of true friends, of the first rank, who were willing to share their danger. Savile House, Rockingham House, Devonshire House to be turned into garrisons! We have all served the country for several years,—some of us for near thirty,—with fidelity, labour, and affection: and we are obliged to put ourselves under military protection for our houses and our persons."<sup>7</sup> There seemed no end to the agony and humiliation of the imperial city. On the sixth night of the disturbances a large part of London was still in possession of the mob. Six-and-thirty distinct and separate conflagrations could be counted from one spot of observation; and the rattle of musketry was heard in many quarters, since the town was filling fast with troops, who by this time had begun to use their deadly weapons to effective purpose. Two days, and nights, had still to elapse before the revolt was finally quenched in blood, and drowned in liquor; for three or four hundred of the rioters had been shot down, and a great, but

<sup>7</sup> Edmund Burke to Richard Shackleton; Tuesday night, June 13, 1780.

unknown, number had died of drink, or perished in the ruins of the burning houses.

The Opposition leaders had signalised themselves by their calmness and self-possession during the whole of these frightful and bewildering events. In the House of Peers, on the first day of the riots, as one noble lord, after another, made his way into the Chamber with his face pale and bruised, and his coat in tatters, and his wig awry,—and while the roar of the furious multitude was heard through the windows,—the Duke of Richmond was in possession of the floor. Unmoved by any emotion except anger he haughtily declared that, however many partisans of disorder “were at that moment thundering at the door, and hallooing in his ears,” he could only say that he had voted with sincere conviction for the Bill of which they complained, and that, were they ten times as numerous, he would never consent to vote otherwise. And then, setting aside that aspect of the matter as a trivial incident, he entered upon a clear, minute, and very copious explanation of his plan for annual parliaments, like a great preacher who quietly proceeds with his sermon when there has been an alarm of fire in a crowded church. Burke,—after he had stowed away his books where they could be safe from destruction, and had placed his wife beyond the reach of danger,—dismissed a party of soldiers whom the Government, handsomely enough, had sent to protect his residence. “I thought,” he said, “that, in the scarcity of troops, they might be better employed than in looking after my paltry remains.” Next day he showed himself in the streets, alone and unguarded, not concealing his identity, and talking courteously and seriously with the more decent wearers of the blue cockade.<sup>8</sup> He made his way to Westminster through the densest of the throng, and there delivered his mind to his brother members. “I spoke my sentiments,” (he wrote,) “in such a way that I do not think I have ever, on any occasion, seemed to affect the House more forcibly. However, such was the confusion, that they could not be kept from coming to a resolution which I thought unbecoming and pusillanimous, which was that we should take that flagitious petition, which came from that base gang called The Protestant Association, into our serious consideration.” And, again, it was

<sup>8</sup> Richard Burke wrote thus to his brother's principal constituent. “We are all, thank God, hitherto safe. Edmund, who delivered himself, with his name, into their hands, is safe, firm, and composed. Some blame him. The house yet stands. I rather think it will go to-night, if their other more important objects do not divert them.” Richard Burke to Richard Champion; June 7, 1780, in *what was London*.

admitted on all hands that no one showed himself more energetic in the cause of order than John Wilkes. The Lord Mayor of London disgraced himself by his timidity and slothfulness, and was afterwards called upon by the Attorney General to account for his gross neglect of duty; another important civic dignitary ordered the constables of his Ward to mount the Protestant colours, and took care to be seen arm in arm with Lord George Gordon; but Alderman Wilkes sat in Court daily, during all the stated hours, committing for trial a long list of culprits who had been caught red-handed. He went in person through a bad quarter of the town to arrest the printer of a seditious handbill; and, to the intense amusement of contemporary mankind, he was reported, (though he always stoutly denied it,) to have arrested persons "under General Warrants issued on anonymous information." It remains an open question whether the individual in all London, who displayed the greatest coolness and courage during that awful crisis, was King George the Third himself, or the man among his twelve million subjects whom His Majesty loved the least.

Burke, and Sir George Savile, and the Duke of Richmond, were ill-rewarded for their exertions in defence of the law, and were misrepresented to the world as the prime instigators of a barbarous raid upon those very Roman Catholics whose civil rights they had advocated with so much eloquence and pertinacity. As soon as tranquillity had been restored, and Lord George Gordon securely lodged in the Tower, the Ministerial press, with significant unanimity, fell to accusing the parliamentary Opposition of having organised and financed the riot in the hope that it would enlarge its dimensions, and assume the character of a revolution. The only evidence adduced was in the shape of unfounded rumours, and baseless assumptions, artfully scattered up and down the columns of printed matter which recorded the authentic news of the day.<sup>9</sup> The cue was given by a paragraph in the *Morning Post*, a journal notoriously in close alliance with the Treasury. "The miscreants," (so the allegation was worded,) "who have been defacing and destroying with the most savage brutality, were not summoned to the work of villainy solely by the traitorous

<sup>9</sup> One newspaper reported that "the French Ambassador at the Hague had said confidently that, within the space of two months, we should hear of London being burned to the ground,"—a piece of information which he was supposed to have learned "from a certain nobleman in treasonable correspondence with the foes of his country;" and a chimney-sweep, who was directing the operations of the rioters, had been seen to pull out of his pocket a handful of shillings which he only too probably had received from a well-known member of the Opposition.

trumpet of Lord George Gordon. The rest of the patriot tribe laid the foundation-stone, and Lord George has but completed the pile of infamy and treason." So outrageous an indictment had never been concocted since the Emperor Nero charged the Christians with setting Rome in flames. But the opponents of Lord North, unlike those primitive martyrs, were by no means a helpless or long-suffering folk. The City of London,—most of whose inhabitants were at once staunch friends of order, and determined enemies of the Ministry,—was all alive with indignation and resentment. The Court of Common Council had been convoked to pass a well-earned vote of thanks to the City Militia, and present a pair of colours to the Associations of Horse and Foot Volunteers who had evinced zeal and prowess in the suppression of the tumult.<sup>10</sup> The offensive passage in the *Morning Post* was on the same occasion brought to the notice of the Council, and a resolution was carried in favour of prosecuting the publishers of the newspaper which had cast a false and odious imputation upon eminent public men whom their fellow-citizens held in respect and honour.

Shabby things have often been done, and not on one side only, in the interests of party; but perhaps the shabbiest proceedings on record were the tactics employed by Lord North's Government in the summer of the year 1780. On the one hand the leaders of the Opposition were credited by the Ministerial press with the authorship of the Roman Catholic Relief Act in order to alienate from them the support of ultra Protestants at the impending general election; and on the other hand they were accused of having organised and financed those anti-Catholic riots which had set London in flames. But men who expect nothing short of fair play from opponents, and who count upon winning popular favour, and popular support, in exact proportion to their deserts, had better keep out of public life. There were symptoms which indicated that the dismay and disgust, felt by all respectable persons during the week that London lay at the mercy of the wreckers, had produced a temporary, but most undeniable, set-back to the fortunes of the Opposition. The Court, though not the Cabinet, was enjoying a turn of genuine popularity. Law and order had been imperilled by the supineness and timidity of the men in office, who had failed in the most elementary duty of rulers,—the protection of society. But the situation had been saved by the personal interposition

<sup>10</sup> Their services met with inadequate recognition from the regular army. An officer of the Footguards had been overheard to say that, if the Volunteers behind him would ground their arms, he was not afraid of the mob in front.



of the King; and George the Third, for good or for evil, was recognised to be a more important factor in the government of the country than all his Ministers together.

The most instructive and universal lesson which history teaches is that mob violence, by an inevitable and natural reaction, increases the prestige of arbitrary authority; and the effect which the disturbances had wrought on public opinion was acknowledged in manful and plain-spoken terms by the leading Opposition newspaper. "One good circumstance for Administration," (thus the *Evening Post* confessed,) "is that, previous to the Riots, the public were anxious about the fate of the County petitions, the result of the American war, and the success of our fleets. The whole of these important matters now, like wisdom, 'sleepeth in a fool's ear;' while association for domestic defence, Lord George Gordon, who is to be hanged, and such-like tales, form almost the whole of public conversation." Within a few weeks after the suppression of the Gordon riots it became matter of notoriety in the London clubs that writs, summoning a new House of Commons, had already been prepared for issue. Horace Walpole told his friend Mason that, according to information which had reached him, Parliament was to have been dissolved on the ninth of August, but that the announcement had been delayed in the hope that every post might bring news of a successful battle on sea or land. "A leaf of laurel," he said, "no bigger than one shred of a daisy, would give wing to the Proclamation that lies ready to fly." Walpole's surmise was correct; but the policy of waiting for a possible victory was condemned as infinitely foolish by the two most powerful, and knowing, members of the Cabinet. The Earl of Sandwich represented to Mr. John Robinson that Rigby was exceedingly eager and anxious about the speedy, or rather immediate, dissolution of Parliament. "I think," (continued Sandwich,) "all your reasons for delay are weak. Our opponents are depressed. The nation is set against riots and rioters of all kinds. Events have been favourable beyond conception. Will you wait to give our enemies time to rally and re-unite, and for some blow in our military operations to turn the tide of popularity against us?" Sandwich and Rigby carried the day; and on the first of September 1780, towards the end of the sixth year of its life, the Parliament was dissolved.<sup>11</sup>

For months past everybody had been anticipating a Dissolution; and

<sup>11</sup> Letter of August 1, 1780, from *The Papers of the Marquess of Abergavenny*, as published by the *Historical Manuscripts Commission* in the year 1887.

yet, when the Proclamation at last appeared, it "operated like a thunder-clap, with respect to its suddenness and surprise, on those who were not in the secret."<sup>12</sup> A stratagem which put to sleep the vigilance of the Opposition was engineered by the King himself, who had nothing to learn about the conduct of a General Election, and who knew the value of a three days' start in a house-to-house canvass as well as any local party manager in England. His Majesty despatched to the Prime Minister a letter of instructions covering four sheets of paper, and marked "Most Private." He expressed his desire that Parliament should be prorogued, with every circumstance of publicity, until the fourth day of October, and that the writs, without any hint of the step which was in contemplation having been allowed to transpire, should go forth on the first day of September. There was no need, in his opinion, that Lord North should deprive himself of a well deserved, and most necessary, holiday. "On the contrary," (wrote the King,) "I recommend that you should have it publicly given out that you have gone into Kent for three weeks or a month. You might stay in Kent until the 28th of August, and return to Bushy on that day, unknown, and unexpectedly; for, while you and the Ministers are still in and about town, a momentary Dissolution is expected." The King's own preparations were in a state of forwardness, although the last few touches remained to be given. "I will tell Sir Patrick Crawford," (he said,) "that, if he can secure the second seat at Arundel, undoubtedly a friend is ready to give £3000; but that I doubt he will find that they must give Lord Surrey one member." A week afterwards His Majesty sent Mr. John Robinson a packet of banknotes, to the amount of fourteen thousand pounds, under cover of a letter; and then he awaited the event with the calmness of an experienced general on the eve of a campaign, who is conscious that he has neglected nothing which can minimise disappointment, and ensure success.<sup>13</sup>

The opponents of the Ministry were scattered all over the island at their own, or other people's, rural mansions; at race-meetings and county-ball gatherings, in the Pump-rooms at Bath and Buxton, and on the Pantiles at Tunbridge Wells. Not a few among them, as soon as the parliamentary session ended, had hastened down from Westminster to do active duty with their militia regiments. Sir George Savile, on the strength of a private assurance that all idea of an immediate Dissolution had been abandoned, was in camp on Ranmer

<sup>12</sup> *History of Europe in the Annual Register for 1781*; chapter 8.

<sup>13</sup> *Papers of the Marquess of Abergavenny*; pages 33, 34.

Common. "The shortness of the time," we are told, "allotted for the election increased the difficulties and disadvantages to those who were at a distance from their boroughs or interests." So many express messengers had been sent off into every part of England, to convey the writs, and warn the Ministerial candidates, that a sufficient supply of horses could not be procured even by the Post Office. The demand for chaises was so great that it was not unusual to see three passengers in the same carriage, behind a postillion mounted upon a single horse. That was not the style in which Charles Fox, and his political associates, had been accustomed to travel. While aspirants to parliamentary honours were plunged in worry and discomfort the constituents lived in clover. At Taunton in Somersetshire, for a considerable time past, five pounds of beef, and six quarts of strong beer, had been issued daily to each voter; and in scores of boroughs, and dozens of counties, an elector might call for liquor at the candidate's expense during all the time that the political Saturnalia lasted. It was a bad September for the partridges. "The dissolution of parliament," (so a journalist noted,) "is a sad blow to the preservation of game. Every man who has a vote can have leave to shoot by only asking for it." A slight, but not imperceptible, addition to the prevailing turmoil resulted from an electoral process which, under the terms of our Constitution, was carried on simultaneously with the election of a House of Commons. It was a process which in those days, though not altogether in ours, had very little serious meaning for anybody. "The ridiculous practice," said the *Morning Post*, "of dissolving the Convocation, and calling a new one, which will never sit, continues still an insult to common sense, and is to a New Parliament what the Clown is to the pantomime." Those were strong expressions for the columns of a high Tory newspaper; and they bear significant testimony to the ecclesiastical apathy which marked the whole middle period of the eighteenth century.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The amount of liquor for which a candidate was obliged to pay was for him a less grave matter than the amount of liquor which he was called upon to consume. In 1780 two young Whigs of the Opposition successfully contested Cambridgeshire against the sitting member, Sir Sampson Gideon, "whose expenses for this month," (so one of his friends reported,) "have been enormous, beyond all belief. Sending my servant on a particular message to Sir Sampson, he found him in bed, not well, and probably half asleep. \* \* \* I wonder, indeed, that he is alive, considering the immense fatigue, and necessary drinking, he must undergo." This form of tyranny had not altogether died out in the later days of Lord Palmerston. On an evening in the London season of 1865 the author was told, by a refined and fastidious man of letters and fashion, that he had been canvassing Hertfordshire all day, and that he had been obliged to accept thirteen glasses of sherry since breakfast. And what sherry!

The election of 1780 was full of personal interest; for several famous members of the House of Commons changed their constituencies under circumstances which throw an informing light upon the national manners, and upon the politics of the time. Burke's position at Bristol, —irksome, and almost intolerable, as from the very first it was,—had at length become untenable. He was a poor man; and a contest for the representation of the great seaport cost, day for day, almost as much as a small war. The expenses of his election in 1774 had been cheerfully and proudly defrayed by his local supporters. But by the year 1780 our colonial trade had been destroyed, and our foreign trade more than half ruined, as a consequence of that American policy which Burke had always condemned and resisted; and his friends at Bristol, however willing, were totally unable to find the requisite funds. Moreover there were deeper, and more sinister, causes operating against Edmund Burke's prospects as a candidate than the mere want of money. Many of his constituents, for selfish reasons of their own, resented his vigorous protest against the cruel abuses under which the poorer class of debtors suffered. A very much larger number had never forgiven him his efforts for the removal of penal laws against their Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen, and for the redress of commercial injustice to Ireland. His intimate knowledge of those two questions,—fired by enthusiasm, and decked out by elequence,—had produced a decisive effect upon the public mind. The remedial measures, which had been placed on the Statute Book, were undoubtedly either introduced, or accepted, by Lord North's Government, and sanctioned by the general, or unanimous, adhesion of Parliament. But Burke, though only a private member, was so great a man that the anger aroused in certain quarters by that humane and equitable legislation was most unfairly concentrated upon his single person. The impertinence of his detractors went to such a point that he was called upon, as a penance for his misdeeds, to rise in his place in the House of Commons, and propose the repeal of the Roman Catholic Relief Act. "Am I," (he indignantly asked,) "to be the only sour and narrow-hearted bigot out of five hundred and fifty-eight gentlemen? Not one but Lord George Gordon, for purposes of his own, ever objected to the Act in question, opposed it, or proposed any repeal of it whatsoever; and am I to make myself the dupe of a dirty faction at Edinburgh, because their miserable agents have set on a rabble of miscreants here to insult the parliament, to demolish Newgate, and attempt to



plunder the Bank?"<sup>15</sup> That was a touch of Burke's familiar style when he was writing in confidence to a private correspondent; and he soon found occasion to state the case as between himself, and the city of Bristol, in spoken words which will endure as long as men read English.

On the eighth of September 1780 Burke addressed a Town Meeting in the Guildhall at Bristol. The speech was beyond criticism and above praise; and it is too symmetrically constructed, and continuously argued, to justify the quotation of detached passages. It should be studied, and re-studied, by every public man, (Conservative or Liberal, for Edmund Burke was both,) as an exposition of the principles which ought to govern the relations of a member and his constituents. When Burke had had his say he presented himself as a candidate, first at the Council House, and then on the Exchange. A very short canvass, (in the course of which one of his opponents died suddenly,) satisfied him that under no circumstances would the choice of the electors fall upon himself; and on the day of nomination he gave up the contest, and bade farewell to Bristol in a few sentences attuned to a strain that has seldom been heard on the hustings.<sup>16</sup> The feeling with which the news was received by all gallant and honourable men, to whatsoever party they might belong, is exemplified in a letter scribbled off by Charles Fox at the most exciting moment of his own hard-fought election. "Indeed, my dear Burke," he hastened to write, "it requires all your candour and reverse of selfishness, (for I know no other word to express it,) to be in patience with that rascally city; for so I must call it after the way in which it has behaved to you." Burke did not remain long outside Parliament, for Lord Rockingham invited him to resume his former seat at Malton in the North Riding, where he was welcomed back with a genuine Yorkshire greeting. "Every heart," (said the *Evening Post*,) "seemed to rejoice that the services of this truly great man were restored to the nation. The concourse of people that assembled from the neighbouring towns on this occasion was prodigious."

<sup>15</sup> Edmund Burke Esq. to John Noble Esq.; Charles Street, August 11, 1780.

<sup>16</sup> "I have served the public for fifteen years. I have served you in particular for six. What is passed is well stored. It is safe, and out of the power of fortune. What is to come is in wiser hands than ours, and He, in whose hands it is, best knows whether it is best for you and me that I should be in parliament, or even in the world. The melancholy event of yesterday reads to us an awful lesson against being too much troubled about any of the objects of ordinary ambition. The worthy gentleman, who has been snatched from us at the moment of the election, and in the middle of the contest, whilst his desires were as warm, and his hopes as eager, as ours, has feelingly told us what shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue."

gious, and the day was spent in the utmost festivities." Burke can hardly be blamed if his experience during the year 1780 confirmed him in his belief that the evils which beset the State ought to be cured by other means than by adding to the representation of populous constituencies, and disfranchising the smaller boroughs.

Admiral Keppel's fate was watched by politicians, not of his own party only, with a friendly attention for which leisure is seldom found during the selfishness and hurry of a general election. Eighteen months previously he had been thrust, sorely against his will, into sensational prominence and unexampled popularity; and,—modest, generous, and forgiving that he was,—he retained until his dying day, which was not very far distant, the affection of his countrymen. But he had enemies and ill-wishers, and now their chance had once more come. Keppel sat for the borough of Windsor, and the King was determined to have him out of it. Racy stories were current of His Majesty's somewhat clumsy, but very effective, industry as a canvasser that would be quite incredible if it were not for the evidence in his own handwriting which recent times have brought to light. Early in April he informed the Secretary of the Treasury that he should make it his business "privately to sound the inhabitants of the borough," and report the result to the central office in Downing Street; and it must be allowed that the royal methods of ascertaining and influencing local opinion were more direct than dignified.<sup>17</sup> As the day of election approached he gave orders that each of his houses in the town should stand on the rate-book in the name of one or another of his servants, and he made arrangements by which, at the cost of some discomfort to themselves, they should qualify as inhabitants of the borough. Keppel, under grievous temptation, bore himself like a loyal subject, and a man of fine honour. In a speech from the hustings he alluded to a rumour of the King's interference in the election. "This," he said, "cannot be believed. It *ought* not to be believed. It *must* not be believed."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Lord Albemarle relates a family tradition to the effect that the King visited the shop of a silk mercer, who was a sworn Keppelite, "and said in his usual quick manner, 'The Queen wants a gown,—wants a gown. No Keppel! No Keppel!'"

<sup>18</sup> The King's correspondence with Mr. John Robinson, in reference to his Windsor houses, is given by the Historical Manuscripts Commission among the other Abergavenny papers. The London Evening Post entered into particulars. "Colonel Egerton and Colonel Conway,—gentlemen who have splendid apartments in the Castle,—being rated for some stables in the town, slept each of them in a dirty bed in a neighbouring house in order to become inhabitants. The King had purchased some houses in the town, and sent Mr. Ramus, and some of his musicians, to sleep there one night. Two days before the election they paid the rates for these houses, instead of the King."

The royal bakers, and brewers, and butchers polled against the Admiral to a man. He was beaten by sixteen votes, and the opponent who had ousted him was soon afterwards appointed Ranger of Windsor Little Park. As soon as the news got abroad a large deputation from Surrey waited upon the defeated candidate, and he was forthwith put in nomination for the county, and elected by a majority of over five hundred. Those Surrey voters who resided in Windsor raced home to announce the victory. Keppel informed Lord Rockingham that the cannon were soon firing, and the bells ringing, and that almost every dwelling throughout the borough was lighted. "I have been told," he wrote, "that His Majesty said that it would possibly be 'a busy night,' and had recommended a serjeant and twelve privates to patrol the streets with loaded arms." But Keppel had partisans in the neighbourhood who could not have been shot however badly they might misbehave themselves. The Prince of Wales, and Prince Frederick, took pains to express to all Keppel's friends their extreme satisfaction at his success; and the little Duke of Sussex, (as he long afterwards informed Lord Albemarle,) was locked up in the royal nursery for wearing Keppel colours. One sentence in the Admiral's Address of Thanks to the Electors of Surrey was read with special interest and sympathy. "After the example of your fathers," he wrote, "you have taught wicked men the ill husbandry of injustice, and the folly of attempting public, undisguised, oppression in a country whose liberties have in very memorable instances been strengthened and improved by the wrongs of the obscurest individual in it." That much notice Keppel took, and no more, of the treacherous and unrelenting persecution which he had endured from a British Ministry ever since he went to sea in command of a British fleet in obedience to the pressing request of his Sovereign.

A man of genius, almost as celebrated as Edmund Burke himself, lost a seat in Parliament, and was subsequently provided with another, under conditions most characteristic of the period. Gibbon had always been on friendly terms with Mr. Edward Eliot, his cousin by marriage, a Cornish squire whose borough interest was exorbitant out of all proportion to his not inconsiderable landed property. At the general election of 1774 Eliot,—not indeed for nothing, but in return for a much smaller sum of money than he would have expected from any one except a clever and promising member of his own family,—sent his relative to the House of Commons as one of the members for Liskeard. "There," wrote Gibbon, "I took my seat at the beginning

of the memorable contest between Great Britain and America, and supported, with many a sincere and silent vote, the rights, though not perhaps the interests, of the mother-country." When the 1774 Parliament was a twelvemonth old, Mr. Eliot left his family borough of St. Germans in order to sit for Cornwall; and the freeholders of Cornwall, like the great majority of county freeholders all the island over, had no love for the American policy of the Cabinet. Their sentiments were shared to the full by Mr. Eliot; and accordingly, as soon as Parliament was dissolved in September 1780, he gravely and solemnly warned his unlucky cousin that, by the support which he had given to Lord North, he had forfeited the confidence of his constituents. Gibbon understood the inner meaning of that ominous communication. "Mr. Eliot," (so he afterwards explained to the world in one of his multitudinous autobiographies,) "was now deeply engaged in the measures of Opposition; and the electors of Liskeard are commonly of the same opinion as Mr. Eliot."<sup>19</sup> Gibbon accepted his doom in a letter gracefully phrased, and as manly and self-respecting as the situation comported. "I have not attempted," he said, "to shake your decided resolution; nor shall I presume to arraign the consistency of the Electors of Liskeard, whom you so gravely introduce. You are undoubtedly free as air to confer, and to withdraw, your parliamentary favours." That was how Edward Gibbon wrote when he doffed the panoply of the classic historian. It was a serious blow to his personal fortunes. If he ceased to be a Member of Parliament he must very soon cease to be a Lord of Trade; and without an official salary he could not afford to live in England, and still less in London, until he had secured a competence by the completion, and publication, of the last three among the six volumes of *The Decline and Fall*. But Lord North entertained for his eminent supporter a kindness which Gibbon long afterwards repaid by a nobly expressed tribute of gratitude and fidelity;<sup>20</sup> and the historian ere long re-entered the House of Commons as the nominee for a Government borough. "My new constituents of Lymington," (he wrote in July 1781,) "obligingly chose me in my absence. I took my seat last Wednesday, and am now so old a member that I begin to complain of the heat and length of the Session."

Far and away the most important event in the general election of

<sup>19</sup> *Memoir E* of Mr. Murray's edition, page 322.

<sup>20</sup> *Preface to the Fourth Volume of the Quarto Edition of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.*



1780,—whether considered in its bearing upon the American question, or on Charles Fox's position in the House of Commons and the country,—was the contest for the representation of the City of Westminster. The Government were at much pains to strengthen their hold upon that vast electorate; and they had secured a pair of candidates very hard to beat. With excellent judgment they put forward Sir George Rodney, who at that precise moment would have been chosen by acclamation in almost any free and independent constituency throughout Great Britain. He possessed every qualification for uniting the suffrages of all parties. He was a personal adherent of the King, and had expended very large sums of money, which he could ill afford to spare, in fighting His Majesty's electioneering battles; and yet all the world was aware that he positively abominated Lord Sandwich,—a piece of knowledge which was in itself a passport to the favour of his fellow-countrymen. The First Lord of the Admiralty had spited and ill-used Rodney in the past; and it was not until the fifth year of the war drew towards a conclusion that, in the dearth of capable naval commanders, public opinion at length insisted on the neglected officer being employed at sea. It soon became evident that in this veteran of sixty-two years old, with an impaired constitution, and a broken fortune, the nation had got hold of a most competent, and, (what in those disastrous times was rarer still,) a lucky admiral. Early in January 1780 Rodney captured five-and-twenty Spanish merchantmen, together with the whole of their escort. A week afterwards, in the neighbourhood of Cape St. Vincent, he attacked Don Juan Langara's squadron in a style which Englishmen had begun to fear was obsolete, taking four seventy-gun ships with all their crews, and sending three others into the air, or to their last berth among the breakers. Then, before many more days had elapsed, he accomplished his special mission of revictualling the garrison of Gibraltar. General Eliott, the hero of that immortal defence, was already experimenting in his own person on the amount of sustenance which could keep body and soul together, and had brought himself down to four ounces of rice a day, when a brig ran the gauntlet of the blockade with the tidings that Rodney was at hand with a victorious fleet, and a supply of beef, and flour, and beer, and biscuit which would suffice for many months to come.

When the King dissolved Parliament in September 1780 Rodney was on board his flag-ship, in face of the enemy, three thousand miles away on the further side of the Atlantic Ocean; but the mere name

of him was worth more than the bodily presence of any other possible candidate. The second choice of the Ministry fell upon one of the ex-members for Westminster, the son and heir of the Duke of Newcastle, "Thomas Pelham Clinton, commonly called Lord Thomas Pelham Clinton,"—and, more commonly still, the Earl of Lincoln. The Duke apparently regarded that imposing cluster of famous political names as a sufficient donation on the part of his family towards the success of the election; and he steadfastly refused to subscribe to the party funds. "If Mr. Fox stands," (so Lord North told the Secretary of the Treasury,) "we shall have much trouble, and more expense, which will all fall on us. Neither Lincoln nor Rodney will contribute." Ready cash was equally necessary in the opposite camp. It was all Charles Fox could do if he found enough silver to pay for his hackney-coaches; but his political associates came to his help with well-advised liberality. Ever since he entered Parliament at the age of nineteen he had been sitting for boroughs which contained few houses, or, (in one case,) no houses at all. That was all very well while he was playing the fool, more brilliantly than it has ever been played before or since, during his first half-dozen Sessions. But he now was the leader of a strong party, and the most popular champion of a great cause; and he would carry much more weight as the chosen representative of Westminster, with its myriad of electors, than as member for Midhurst, or even for Malmesbury. In the year 1830 the assailants of West Indian slavery, and the advocates of Parliamentary Reform, subscribed scores of thousands of pounds to bring in Henry Brougham for the premier county of Yorkshire; and that circumstance has always been regarded as one of the most honourable episodes in Brougham's career. And so, at a not less grave crisis in the fortunes of England, Lord Rockingham and his friends, with open purses, and clear consciences, rallied to the assistance of Charles Fox at Westminster.

Fox had lately been engaged in the novel occupation of paying attention to his bodily health, which those who knew him best did not regard as a very hopeful enterprise. "Charles," wrote one of his associates, "is not yet well, and is advised going to Bath. He talks of going tomorrow; but I am afraid he will not conform to his physician's advice; and they say, unless he lives very abstemiously, the waters will do him more harm than good." How Charles Fox maintained the character of an invalid must always be matter for conjecture. His next authentic appearance on the surface of history is recorded in a letter from the Duke of Queensberry, who gave him what no doubt was far

too good a dinner at Amesbury in Wiltshire. The Duke's report to George Selwyn was to the effect that Charles thought himself the better for Bath, but had not yet recovered his voice. It was the thirty-first of August, and Fox was then on his way to Bridgewater, where he had been invited by the local Whigs to stand for their borough. He distrusted his chances of success at Westminster, and was not sorry to have a second string to his redoubted bow.<sup>21</sup> Fox was still in the West of England when, like all who were not in the secret, the announcement of the Dissolution took him by surprise. He at once dashed off a letter to Richard Fitzpatrick in the offhand, but very businesslike, terms which marked all his communications to his nearest friend, and with plenty of full-stops to make his meaning clear. "For God's sake, my dear Dick," (he wrote,) "lose no time in calling the Westminster Committee, and beginning the Canvass if necessary. Do let all the gentlemen who really wish to serve me know how very necessary their appearance is. Some of the Cavendishes particularly. If I find I can leave this place without any material injury I will be in town tomorrow. But if you think I can be absent from Westminster for a few days I could get the Election here on Wednesday, and stay till then, which would be of use. Pray send me word directly what you think, and do not leave town unless it is absolutely necessary, for you will be of infinite use."<sup>22</sup>

Fox lost no time in following his letter to London. He arrived in tearing spirits; and, whatever might have been amiss with his voice, there was quite enough of it to serve his purposes. During three full weeks to come he kept the town agog with excitement, and had vitality to spare for the encouragement of his followers in the provinces. England was still ruled by an aristocracy; and the most important personages in Westminster were certain great noblemen who were ground landlords, or who, at the very least, had family mansions in London, with a host of tradesmen dependent on their custom. Charles Fox was a recognised authority among people of rank and fashion, and incomparably their prime favourite. Day after day his pen was busy,—writing to the Duke of Rutland about "Mr. Ramsden the optician, who says that he will not vote unless applied to in your Grace's name;" begging Lord Ossory to propose him at the Nomination, and enquiring whether he knew of any way of getting at Mr. Cheese, the statuary in Piccadilly; and using every endeavour to place himself in

<sup>21</sup> The Revd. Dr. Warner to George Selwyn; September 1, 1780.

<sup>22</sup> Unpublished letter from Fox to Fitzpatrick, dated Bridgewater, Sep. 1.

communication with the young Duke of Bedford, who had property of immense value within the constituency, and who owned the very ground upon which the famous Westminster Hustings were erected. Although a grandson of the nobleman who had given his name to the political connection of which Sandwich, and Rigby, were the ornaments the new duke himself was not "a Bedford." He soon became, and ever after remained, a staunch Foxite; and he is still honourably remembered as a brave friend of liberty in evil days. The ladies were interested in the election as never before, and few among them had the heart to do anything which could injure the prospects of Charles Fox. He hoped, (he said,) to prevent the Dowager Duchess of Bedford from speaking against him, even if she would not speak for him; and the Morning Post, chivalrously and prettily enough, admitted that "from the moment when the Duchess of Devonshire mounted the hustings every voter was a slave."<sup>23</sup>

Charles, over and above his own election, had taken upon himself the cares of another exciting contest in which he felt a sort of fatherly interest, inasmuch as the candidate whose fortunes he promoted had only just turned two-and-twenty. Many frequenters of White's and Brooks's,—and those not always the most studious and learned among them,—had been persuaded by Fox into paying their fees as Masters of Arts until the general election was past and gone; and now, in the breathless intervals of his own canvass, he found time to hunt them up, and pack them off to vote for Jack Townshend in the Senate-house at Cambridge. On the ninth of September Selwyn was informed, in a very doleful letter, that the boldest boy who ever was seen had been returned for the University "by the help of a great number of profligate young fellows who had kept their names in on purpose."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> The Duchess of Northumberland, who had electioneered much in Westminster, did not know her business nearly as well as the Duchess of Devonshire. "Her Grace," said William Whitehead, the Poet Laureate, "goes most condescendingly out of her sphere, shakes every basketwoman by the hand, and tells them with a sigh that she cannot, what she wishes to do, give them meat and drink in abundance; for that, in these newfangled times, would be bribery and corruption."

<sup>24</sup> Thirty years afterwards Lord Palmerston became Member for the University of Cambridge. He was a Tory Minister, well liked by his political opponents; a distinguished son of the great college of St. John's, in which the strongest corporate spirit has always prevailed; and a celebrated leader of fashion in London. He was said at the time to have owed his election to "the Whigs, the Johnians, and the Dandies." The Marquises of Townshend were Johnians; and the College, (as may be seen in Gunning's *Reminiscences of Cambridge*), was devoted to their family.



Charles Fox had plenty of aristocratic influence on his side, as well as plenty against him; but his best advocate was himself. He was the most irresistible of canvassers. He had not an atom of condescension, or of conscious affability, about him. Respecting his brother-man, and without respect of persons, he was the same everywhere, always, and to everybody. Frank and cheery, he enjoyed the sound of his own voice, and the sympathy of his company, whether he was talking to one, or to ten thousand; and he made no pretence of being indifferent to the good-will and applause of his fellows. In a letter to Edmund Burke, written during the heat of this election, he referred incidentally to the acclamations that were dinning in his ears, "for which," (he said,) "you know I have as much taste as any man;" and no one who can recall what he himself was at thirty will think any worse of Charles Fox for that honest confession. Londoners, great and small, repaired every afternoon to Covent Garden, as eagerly as to a prize-fight or a horse-race, in order to hear him flood the Market with the torrent of his oratory. A partisan of the Government has left an account of what took place on the eighth of September, the second day of the polling. "Charles Fox," wrote Dr. Warner, "keeps us all alive here with letters, and paragraphs, and a thousand clever things. I saw him to-day upon the hustings, bowing, and sweltering. A great day he has made of it. Fox 1168. Rodney 994. Lincoln 573."<sup>25</sup> On the eleventh of the month Rodney outstripped his competitors, and thenceforward always kept the first place; but it mattered little who was head of the poll as long as Lord Lincoln stayed at the bottom of it. Many electors, whose chief concern was the credit of the borough of Westminster, adopted the course of dividing their votes between the two most distinguished candidates; and, when the poll finally closed on the twenty-second of September, the numbers were 4230 for Rodney, 3805 for Fox, and 3070 for Lincoln. The town went fairly mad. After Fox had returned thanks the populace pulled the hustings to pieces, and ran away with the materials,—for which the three candidates had paid, or owed, a great deal of money. Fox was chaired, and carried in triumph through the whole of the constituency, and there was a specially exuberant demonstration at the foot of St. James's Street, just outside the main gate of the Royal Palace. Not a few of those who had voted against Fox were pleased, or at all events amused, by the

<sup>25</sup> Whenever *The Critic* was played during the Westminster Election Mr. Puff's gag at the end of the First Act was a memorandum "to support Sir George Rodney in the Daily Spy, and to kill Charles Fox in the Morning Post."

result of the election. The eminent naval officer who acted as proxy for Rodney in his absence, and who shared Rodney's sentiments towards the First Lord of the Admiralty, did not even pretend to regret that Lord Sandwich's candidate had been defeated. Like a jolly sailor, he could see no reason against taking his share in the fun. "Admiral Young," (wrote a backer of Fox,) "dined with us, which we consider as an acknowledgment that Rodney was more indebted to us for support than to the Court, which was certainly true." There were other banquets to follow; but the first of them was enough for Edmund Burke. He had come up to London, and had stopped there, at his friend's disposal, as long as there was serious work to do; but he had no appetite for the festive side of politics, and he soon took himself off, with a sense of profound relief, to his farm and his library in Buckinghamshire.<sup>26</sup>

Seven fresh Barons were made in a single batch, which was a very large creation indeed in days when a peerage was still a rare distinction. A hundred and thirteen new men entered the House of Commons, most of whom were acceptable to the Court. "The Minority members," (said the *Evening Post*,) "have been mustered; and we are sorry to acquaint the public that their numbers will not exceed one hundred and seventy, which must leave a great majority in favour of Administration." On the last day of October the Commons assembled to choose a Speaker. Lord North, as was well within his rights, opposed the re-election of Sir Fletcher Norton; and, with less excuse, he put forward as his candidate Charles Wolfran Cornwall, in reward for having acted as a tool of the Government in their attempt to suppress the reporting of critical debates. So strong a Ministerialist, and so acute a judge, as Henry Dundas, the Lord Advocate of Scotland, acknowledged that "the dignity of Parliament, according to the general opinion, had been much let down." It would have been well, (he wrote,) if the Speakership had gone to Mr. Frederick Montagu, a respected member of the Opposition; for in his person both parties would concur in maintaining the decency and order of the House.<sup>27</sup> The debate was keen, and some of the speeches were grave and impressive; but Rigby scornfully repudiated the notion of introducing lofty principles of morality and patriotism into the discussion of such

<sup>26</sup> "The hurry of Fox's election, the business, the company, the joy, the debauch, altogether made me extremely desirous of getting out of town; and I hurried off without writing to you, or to anyone." Burke to Champion; Beaconsfield, September 26, 1780.

<sup>27</sup> Private Letter from Henry Dundas to Mr. John Robinson; November 3, 1780.

a topic. "As to the mighty secret," he said, "and the true cause of moving for a new Speaker by one side of the House, and supporting the old Speaker by the other, it was reducible to a very simple fact; and, when put into plain English, and stripped of the dress of eloquence and the ornaments of oratory, was no more than this: 'We'll vote for you, if you'll be for us.'" Lord North carried his man by a majority of seventy; and that division supplied an accurate measure of the relative strength of the rival parties in the new House of Commons. The general election had been a blow to the leaders of the Opposition which it required all their fortitude and patience to face.

*Meantime, as British taxes soared, loan followed loan in quick succession, and consols shrank in price, military and naval affairs were going adversely for the British. In Europe, Minorca fell to the Spaniards, while in America the long-anticipated military and naval cooperation of France and the United States finally paid rich dividends in the form of the combined operation that brought about the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown on October 19, 1781. For England it was truly a "World Turned Upside Down," the tune that tradition has assigned the British band when the troops marched out to surrender.*

## CHAPTER XX

### THE BEGINNING OF THE END. THE TWENTY-SEVENTH OF MARCH

THROUGHOUT the summer and autumn of 1781 America hung above the Western horizon like a red ball of fire; and the war, which there was in progress, seemed to the imagination of Englishmen as mysterious and unintelligible as if it were taking place on the surface of the planet Mars. There prevailed an instinctive impression that our military operations on that continent were guided by no fixed and rational plan of action, and were inspired by no well-founded expectation of victory. That view was ably and consistently maintained in the pages of the *Whitehall Evening Post*, a most respectable newspaper which made it a duty to warn and advise, rather than to attack, the Government. Our force in the field, (it was there said,) was broken up into no fewer than four very small armies, manœuvring so far apart as to be unable to afford each other the least assistance, and all of them at a great distance from New York, which itself was narrowly watched by the main American army, as well as by a French army, posted in the immediate vicinity of the city.

Halfway through October it became known in England that Admiral Graves had been worsted in a sea-fight at the mouth of the Chesapeake, and had retired to New York, leaving a powerful French fleet in undisputed possession of the Virginia waters. From that moment forward the public apprehension, hitherto vague and undefined, concentrated itself upon the peril which threatened Lord Cornwallis. "We have continually," (wrote the *Whitehall Post*,) "expressed great anxiety for the fate of that brave and noble Lord, and his little army of heroes. These fears have grown on us into downright dread and terror as the season advanced, and the scenes of action developed themselves under that dark and gloomy veil which Ministers endeavour to throw over all our national affairs." Horace Walpole sent



word to Sir Horace Mann at Florence, through a safe channel, that we were at the last gasp in America, and that he was prepared to learn the worst news about Lord Cornwallis. "I would not," he wrote, "say so much as this but by your own courier; for I have too much *fiercé* to allow to enemies even what they know." Selwyn suggested to Lord Carlisle that it would be an instructive exercise for his son and heir, little George Howard, to compare the plight of Lord Cornwallis to the plight of the unhappy Nicias after the defeat of the Athenian fleet in the Great Harbour of Syracuse. The poor boy was still young for a course of Thucydides, even when studied through the medium of Rollin; but it must be acknowledged that, in the essential features of the two stories, it would be impossible to light upon a more complete and ominous parallel. The case was put by Gibbon in the pithy language of an historian who had depicted scores of critical situations, in many lands and many centuries, but never one more fraught with menace. "We all," (he wrote to Lord Sheffield,) "tremble on the edge of a precipice; and, whatever may be the event, the American war seems now to be reduced to very narrow compass both of time and space."

On the twenty-fifth of November 1781 a packet-boat, which had carried a passenger of state from Dover to Calais, brought back a French Gazette with a full account of the capitulation of Yorktown. Among the profound and complex feelings which the news excited one sentiment was prominent, spontaneous, and universal throughout the nation. Nobody blamed Lord Cornwallis, and everybody was sorry for him. The war in America had not been so rich in military reputations that England could afford to bear hard upon the most accomplished and chivalrous of all her generals. Seldom had the British infantry been taken into action in such artistic and dashing style, and seen through their work with such close attention to the varying aspects of the fray, as at Brandywine, and Camden, and Guildford Court House; and, whether correct or incorrect, there was a firm persuasion among Cornwallis's countrymen that, if he had all along been in chief command, and if Lord George Germaine had been forbidden to meddle, the issue of the struggle with our revolted Colonies might have been very different.

To be captured with his army has generally been accounted the ruin of a general's fame, and the end of his professional career. Such was the experience of Burgoyne at Saratoga, and of Mack at Ulm, and of Dupont at Baylen; but it was otherwise with Cornwallis. In the au-

turn of 1794, when the French Republic was proving itself too strong for its adversaries, the three ablest among our Ministers were united in their desire that the Marquis of Cornwallis should be placed in chief command of the British and Austrian armies in Flanders. That was the view of Pitt, and of Grenville, and notably of William Windham, who had a knowledge of war most unusual in an English statesman, and who was then living at the Duke of York's head-quarters, in face of the enemy, in order to see with his own eyes where the responsibility for our disasters lay. King George, unfortunately for the success of our arms, made the question into a matter personal to himself, and would not allow his own son to be superseded; but, both before and after that date, whenever and wherever the highest qualities of the warrior and the ruler were demanded, Cornwallis was always sent to the front in preference to others. Nor did he ever fail to justify the confidence reposed in him. He made a fine record in India, and in Ireland, and again in India, where he died in harness; and yet,—though public gratitude, and public affection, attended him from first to last,—he seldom was more respected and beloved than when in March 1782 he landed in England, a paroled prisoner, fresh from the disaster at Yorktown.<sup>1</sup>

Only two days after the fatal tidings from America arrived in London Parliament was assembled to listen to a King's Speech which had been very hastily rewritten to suit the altered circumstances. How deep was the despondency which prevailed in the Ministerialist ranks may be judged by a contemporary letter from a supporter of the Government who voted with his party to the very last. Anthony Storer, one of the members for the borough of Morpeth, was a man of fashion and pleasure, "the best dancer and skater of his time," and a frequent and familiar guest in the Prime Minister's household. On the evening before the Session opened Lord North, as then was customary, called together a meeting of his followers. "I had attended the Cockpit to-night," said Storer, "where there were a great many long faces. What we are to do after Lord Cornwallis's catastrophe, God knows; or how

<sup>1</sup> On September the 19th, 1794, Windham, who then was Secretary at War in Pitt's Government, addressed a confidential letter to the Prime Minister from the British head-quarters in the field. "It is a game," (he wrote,) "of great skill on either side. If I could, by wishing, set down the general of my choice, I should certainly choose, as the player of that game, my Lord Cornwallis. His authority would do more to correct the abuses of the army. His experience would conduct it better. Should an action be brought on, the army under him would infallibly act with a degree of confidence more, I am sorry to say, than it does under the Duke of York."

anybody can think there is the least glimmering of hope for this nation surpasses my comprehension. \* \* \* The Speech from the Throne contains the same Resolution, which appeared in times when we seemed to have a more favourable prospect of success, of continuing the war, and of claiming the aid of Parliament to support the rights of Great Britain. Charles has a Cockpit to-night as well as Lord North.”<sup>2</sup> On the next afternoon, in the House of Commons, when the Seconder of the Address resumed his seat, Fox plunged straight into the heart of the American question; and in due course of time he reached the topic which was uppermost in the thoughts of all his hearers. “The whole conduct of Lord Cornwallis,” (he said,) “was great and distinguished. While enterprise, activity, and expedition were wanted no man had more of these qualities. At last, when prudence became necessary, he took up a station which, in any former period of our history, would have been a perfect asylum, and planted himself on the edge of the sea. In former wars the sea was regarded as the country of an English commander, to which he could retire with safety, if not with fame. There he was invincible, whatever might be his strength on shore; and there Lord Cornwallis stationed his army, in the hope of preserving his communication with New York,—nay, with the city and port of London. But even this was denied him, for the ocean was no longer the country of an Englishman; and the noble Lord was blocked up, though planted on the borders of the sea.” The effect of those weighty and telling sentences was all the stronger because, up to that point in the speech, the name of the First Lord of the Admiralty, the real and principal culprit, had not been so much as mentioned.

Storer, as in friendship and loyalty bound, sent an account of the debate to Lord Carlisle, the patron of his borough. “Charles Fox,” (he wrote,) “who did not speak as well as he usually does according to the opinion of many, yet in mine was astonishingly great. I never attended to any speech half so much, nor ever did I discover such classical passages in any modern performance. Besides that, (I own,) he convinced me. \* \* \* I did not hear Mr. William Pitt, which I regret very much, as it is said he has even surpassed Charles, and greater expectations are formed from him even than from the other.” Pitt had indeed spoken impressively, calling upon the Ministers to break through the silence in which their plans for the future were shrouded; asking whether gentlemen were still disposed to place their trust in

<sup>2</sup> The Cockpit of old Whitehall Palace stood on the opposite side of the street from the Banqueting House, in front of the present Treasury.

men who hitherto had made so bad a use of the confidence of Parliament; and blaming the Government for insisting upon the presentation of an Address so worded as to tie Parliament down to the prosecution of a war of the impropriety, absurdity, injustice, and ruinous tendency of which every man then present was convinced. "The moment Mr. Pitt sat down a buzz of applause pervaded the House;" and within the fortnight he was up again, addressing the Commons "with his usual force and elegance." There was only one thing, (he affirmed,) in which Ministers seemed to be agreed, and that was in their resolution to destroy the empire which they were called upon to save. "This he feared they would accomplish before the indignation of a great and suffering people should fall upon their heads in the punishment which they deserved; and, (said the Honourable Gentleman in a beautiful conclusion,) may God only grant that that punishment may not be so long delayed as to involve within it a great and innocent family, who, though they can have no share in the guilt, may, and most likely will, be doomed to suffer the consequences!" It would have been interesting to watch King George's countenance while he was reading that audacious peroration in the columns of the newspaper over his early breakfast on the following morning.

The sentiments of patriotic Englishmen of both parties, and of no party, are faithfully reproduced for us in William Cowper's letters. Ever since he had been in a condition to resume an interest in public affairs he had clung, in spite of occasional disillusion and disappointments, to his cherished belief that the Royal policy would ultimately prevail; but his judgment was too sound to withstand the evidence of Yorktown, and he communicated his change of view to John Newton in quiet and explicit terms. If the King and his Ministry, (he wrote,) could be contented to close the business there, it might be well for Old England; but, if they persevered, they would find it a hopeless task. "These are my politics; and, for aught I can see, you and we by our respective firesides,—though neither connected with men in power, nor professing to possess any share of that sagacity which thinks itself qualified to wield the affairs of Kingdoms,—can make as probable conjectures, and look forward into futurity with as clear a sight, as the greatest man in the Cabinet."

The current of William Cowper's prose ran strong and clear; but his deepest emotions found their natural expression in verse. Patriotism, informed by manly common sense, and dignified and purified by religious conviction, has seldom attained a higher level than in the



seventy or eighty couplets which may be read midway between the commencement, and the close, of his Table Talk.

“Poor England! Thou art a devoted deer,  
Beset with every ill but that of fear.  
The nations hunt. All mark thee for a prey.  
They swarm around thee, and thou stand’st at bay,  
Undaunted still, though wearied and perplexed.  
Once Chatham saved thee; but who saves thee next?”

He might well ask that question. There was a member of Lord North’s Cabinet whose name had long been a proverb for prosperous mediocrity. The Right Honourable Welbore Ellis began to draw salary as a Lord of the Admiralty in the year 1747, and he had been drawing salary ever since. He was now Treasurer of the Navy, a post of which the profits, undoubtedly very large, were estimated by the Opposition at twenty thousand pounds a year. “He has,” wrote one of his critics, “a great deal of importance in his manner, and that sort of bowing, cringing politeness which, with the affectation of business, has imposed upon every king, and every minister, and has kept him always in place. His influence at Court must be very considerable, when, during the course of three years, he could get an Irish Barony for his eldest nephew, an Irish bishoprick for his second, and a Commissionership of Customs for the third.”<sup>3</sup> But the advantages which Ellis had secured for himself, and for his family, would have been dearly bought, in the estimation of a self-respecting man, by the disagreeable prominence to which his political advancement condemned him. For a generation and a half in the annals of London society he was a stock object of ridicule to all the wittiest people of his own rank in both the two parties. As far back as 1763 Horace Walpole met him walking in the meadows near Strawberry Hill, and found him “so emptily important, and distilling paragraphs of old news with such solemnity,” that he did not know “whether it was a man, or the Utrecht Gazette.” Five years later on Lord Carlisle, in a letter from Rome, was complaining to George Selwyn about the high price of antique marbles. “Do you think,” he asked, “that the sarcophagus of such a man as Welbore Ellis will ever be sold for twopence? and yet here they ask

<sup>3</sup> *History of the Members of the House of Commons*; London Evening Post, May 1779. Ellis had twice been Vice-Treasurer of Ireland, with very large emoluments from the Irish Treasury, although he did not reside in Ireland, but at Pope’s villa on the Thames near Twickenham, where he altered, and spoiled, the Garden.

ten pounds for those of persons not at all more famous." But inferior organisms have their place in the world of politics, as in the world of nature. Members of the House of Commons had long ago come to regard Ellis as one of the established institutions of the country, and they listened with tolerance to a patriarch who had bored their grandfathers in the days when Mr. Pelham was Prime Minister. On those frequent occasions when Parliament was in a tumult over a Ministerial scandal too bad to be defended by argument, Ellis, "the Forlorn Hope of the Treasury Bench," would rise in his place, with a conciliatory smile on his countenance, and pour forth a stream of irrelevant truisms and commonplaces until the first fury of the storm had abated.

When, as the central calamity in a long and unbroken series of disasters, the surrender of Lord Cornwallis appeared in the London Gazette it was a foregone conclusion in every quarter, and most of all among Lord George Germaine's colleagues in the Cabinet, that Lord George Germaine must go. No one had a word to say in defence of the disgraced and discredited soldier who, as American Secretary, had misdirected two gallant armies to their ruin from his office in Downing Street, three thousand miles across the water. The Minden Court-Martial, when taken in connection with Saratoga and Yorktown, formed a triple burden too heavy for any reputation in the world to bear. The King might have replaced the departing Minister by a far more efficient successor if he had been willing to subordinate his own personal likes and dislikes to the safety of the State. In either House of Parliament there were distinguished soldiers, who at the same time were popular statesmen and tried administrators; but none of them would accept that obligation of implicit subservience to the Royal will, and wholesale adoption of the Royal policy, which their monarch demanded from all his Ministers. If the Archangel Michael had come down from heaven, with an offer to marshal the hosts of England for battle, George the Third would have felt no hesitation in rejecting his services unless he had voted with the Court on the question of the Middlesex Election. In the absolute dearth of public men who were compliant, as well as capable, the King fell back upon the resources of his existing Cabinet, and appointed Welbore Ellis to the post of Secretary of State for the American Department. And so it came to pass that an old official hack, who was now approaching his hundred and fortieth quarter-day, was commissioned by his Sovereign to fill the part of Chatham at a crisis far graver than that which, in June 1759, Chatham himself had been called upon to encounter.

The Ministers knew not which way to turn. Fox was cutting their case to ribbons in debate, and Pitt was thundering away like a re-incarnation of that terrible cornet of horse who, five-and-forty years before, had been too much for the nerves even of Sir Robert Walpole. Dundas the Lord Advocate,—one of the most impudent and unscrupulous, and perhaps one of the ablest, politicians of his own, or any other time,—viewed their cause as hopeless, and already meditated desertion. From this moment forward, whenever he rose for the ostensible purpose of defending his colleagues, he adopted with extraordinary skill a line of argument more embarrassing to the Court and Cabinet than the direct assaults of the Opposition orators. The Livery of London voted a Grand Remonstrance against that prolongation of the American war which had been indicated in the Speech from the Throne. “They besought the King to remove both his public and *private* counsellors, and used these stunning and memorable words: *Your armies are captured. The wonted superiority of your navies is annihilated. Your dominions are lost.*”<sup>4</sup> A crowded meeting of Westminster electors assembled in Westminster Hall to consider an Address to the Throne very similar to that which had emanated from the Livery; and it was almost certain that, if Parliament continued sitting, the example of the metropolis would be imitated in all free and independent constituencies throughout the country. Englishmen, irrespective of party, were determined that Lord Cornwallis should not be made a scapegoat for the sins of his official superiors; and Chancellor Thurlow told the King that notice had been given of no fewer than twelve separate motions of censure on Lord Sandwich in one or another of the two Houses. The Prime Minister and Mr. John Robinson, between them, could hit upon no better resource than to adjourn Parliament over Christmas until the fourth week of January 1782. “Good God!” cried Mr. George Byng. “Adjourn now, when we ought to sit even during the holidays to inquire into the late miscarriage!” Mr. Thomas Townshend and Mr. Charles Fox recalled to the memory of their brother members the parallel state of things in December 1777;—how Parliament, in face of a very solemn protest from the Earl of Chatham, was adjourned for the space of six weeks in consequence of a personal assurance from Lord North that “neither France, nor Spain, had the least intention to molest us;” how the whole of the ensuing

<sup>4</sup> *Last Journals*; December 4, 1781. The italics are Horace Walpole’s. The phrase “private counsellors” was a reference to the legend concerning the secret influence of the Earl of Bute.

January was spent in preparations against an imminent invasion of our island; and how, in the first week of February 1778, a Treaty of Amity and Alliance was signed between the Royal Government of France and the United States of America. But the House of Commons can never bring itself to look with disfavour upon the proposal of a holiday; and, in spite of all that Fox could urge, the motion for an adjournment was carried.

It was an ill-advised step on the part of Ministers. Over and above their natural desire for a respite from parliamentary attack they were prompted by the hope of a military or naval success which might do something to repair their tattered credit. Sanguine expectations had been aroused, not in Government circles only, by the knowledge that Admiral Kempenfeldt had received orders to intercept the Comte de Guichen's fleet on its way out to the West Indies. But the Earl of Sandwich, in the face of repeated warnings from non-official sources, had provided Kempenfeldt with only twelve ships of the line, although a much stronger force just then was at the disposal of the Admiralty; and, when the French hove in sight, they had with them twenty men-of-war, five of which carried a hundred and ten guns apiece. Kempenfeldt, who was a better seaman than his opponent, captured a good many of Admiral de Guichen's store-vessels and transports, but did not venture to risk an engagement with his fighting fleet. The waste of that unique opportunity for inflicting a deadly blow on the naval power of France was felt and resented by the British public almost as keenly as a lost battle. When Parliament met after the Christmas recess the House of Commons, at the instance of Charles Fox, resolved itself into a Committee to inquire into the Causes of the Want of Success of the British Navy; and his speech displayed a breadth of knowledge, and an acuteness of observation, which proved him to be a thorough master of his subject. On the seventh of February 1782, as soon as the Committee was formed, "the clerks, one relieving the other, read through all the papers that had at various times been laid upon the table in consequence of motions made by Mr. Fox. The reading of these papers took up three hours." Mr. Fox then brought forward five charges of culpable negligence against the Earl of Sandwich, and proposed a vote of personal censure on that noble Lord which was supported by a hundred and eighty-three members against two hundred and five. A fortnight afterwards, returning to the assault, he moved that, in the opinion of the House, His Majesty's naval affairs had been greatly mismanaged in the course of the year 1781, and he was defeated



by less than a score of votes in a House of about four hundred and sixty members.<sup>5</sup>

All through December 1781 there had been heavy and even betting whether Germaine or Sandwich would be offered up as the earliest sacrifice for the propitiation of an outraged and angry public. It was noticed that Sandwich, for the first time in his life, looked worn and harassed. His colleagues were impatient to be rid of him, but the King was determined to keep him; and, when the King and the Ministers differed, His Majesty usually contrived to carry the day.<sup>6</sup> Horace Walpole, an onlooker who understood the game, was of opinion that Fox would do well henceforward to leave Lord Sandwich alone. "I told him of it," said Walpole, "and of his wasting his fire on a secondary character, whom all the rest were willing to sacrifice. I advised him to make his push at Lord North, as, if the key-stone could be removed, the whole edifice would fall." Fox listened to the advice with a courtesy which flattered the giver; but he knew his House of Commons by heart, and he had already perceived that the time had come for giving the Ministry its *coup-de-grâce*. His plan of campaign met the approval of his associates, and the next four weeks witnessed as animated and sustained a conflict as ever was fought out by constitutional methods within the walls of any senate. Votes of want of confidence were brought forward in rapid succession by leading members of the Opposition, were discussed in short and sharp debates, and were decided by extraordinarily narrow majorities. Charles Fox directed the operations with rare sagacity and self-command. The political extravagancies of his early youth had been many and notorious, and mistakes of a more fatal and irreparable character lay ahead of him in the near future; but, at this period of his career, his parliamentary strategy and tactics were nothing short of faultless. He kept himself mostly in the

<sup>5</sup> In the eleventh chapter of his *Influence of Sea Power upon History* Admiral Mahan remarks that the Ministry sent out Kempenfeldt with only twelve ships, although a number of others were stationed in the Downs for what Fox justly called "the paltry purpose" of distressing the Dutch trade. "The various charges made by Fox," (so Mahan writes,) "which were founded mainly on the expediency of attacking the Allies before they got away into the ocean wilderness, were supported by the high professional opinion of Lord Howe, who of the Kempenfeldt affair said: 'Not only the fate of the West Indies, but the whole future fortune of the war, might have been decided, almost without a risk, in the Bay of Biscay.'"

<sup>6</sup> "Your friends," (wrote James Hare to Lord Carlisle,) "really make too bad a figure at present. Their keeping Lord Sandwich is madness; but I believe his dismissal does not depend on them. If it did, he would soon be removed."

background; and it was only when a critical moment came that he spoke, briefly and authoritatively, not so much to instruct his audience about the merits of the case as to explain and recommend the practical course of action which it behoved them to adopt.

Fox was the less tempted to exert his faculty for persuasion because unanswerable and irresistible arguments were pouring in upon the House of Commons from every quarter of the compass. In the third week of March news arrived that the Comte de Grasse had captured from us the island of St. Kitts, and that Port Mahon, the capital of Minorca, had surrendered, after a prolonged siege, to a French and Spanish army. Lord Sandwich was very generally held responsible for the fate of Minorca, and most people were inclined to think that, exactly a quarter of a century before, Admiral Byng had been shot for less. "In whatever light," (wrote a vigorous pamphleteer,) "we may view the American dispute, there is a point upon which every person in Great Britain is agreed, which is that all our defeats and misfortunes have been owing to the mismanagement of the navy. If any man had said six months ago that Minorca would change its master, without surprise or stratagem, by the slow advances of the dull Spaniard, with all the opportunities and means that heart could wish to find relief, he would have been esteemed an enemy to his country, and a spy for France and Spain. The House of Bourbon has now the entire possession of the empire of the Mediterranean." The loss of Minorca, no light blow in itself, presaged a still greater misfortune; for the fall of Gibraltar was a conceivable, and even probable, calamity which was seldom absent from the minds of Englishmen, but about which they did not love to talk.

Fox, who was exceedingly busy behind the scenes of the political theatre, kept a watchful eye upon all his followers. He spared no pains to inform himself where his people were to be found, and to get them into the Lobby at the right moment. Never had his appeals to parliamentary truants,—to their wives, their brothers, and, (in case of necessity,) even to their parents,—been more urgently worded, and more persuasive and efficacious. The personal popularity which Charles Fox enjoyed outside the borders of his own party had a recognisable effect upon the turn of affairs during those eventful weeks. Among the large number of Ministerialists who went over to the Opposition, or who remained neutral, was Mr. Crawford of Auchinanes. "The Fish," wrote Selwyn, "did not vote last night, which he was much impatient to discover to Charles, with one of his fulsome compliments." It was

an ill-natured way of putting it; and the more so because Selwyn confessed that he himself was convinced by Fox's speech, and had voted against his conscience on as important an issue as ever was submitted to Parliament.<sup>7</sup> The most alert and enterprising of Fox's lieutenants,—or, (to speak more accurately,) of his allies,—was William Pitt. "He is at the head," said George Selwyn, "of a half-dozen young people, and it is a corps separate from that of Charles's; so there is another Premier at the starting-post, who as yet has never been shaved." That must have been the most enjoyable episode of Pitt's parliamentary existence. He was always active, and always prominent. He told in the divisions, he spoke nine times in less than two months, and his speeches never failed to keep the House alive. On one occasion he announced, to an audience which doubted whether to admire or laugh, that he was firmly resolved not to accept office below the Cabinet. On another occasion he surprised, and less than half pleased, those of his brother members who sat for proprietary boroughs, by exhorting them to have regard for the feelings and interests of their constituents; although he himself, (it must be admitted,) had no constituent worth mentioning except Sir James Lowther. And he took about with him in his pocket a scheme of Parliamentary Reform which, before the Session ended, he came within twenty votes of carrying into law. Reformers, (it has been well remarked,) never again had so good a division till the year 1831.

On the twenty-second of February 1782 General Conway moved an Address praying His Majesty that the war on the Continent of North America might no longer be pursued for the impracticable purpose of reducing the inhabitants of that country to obedience by force. Conway's record on the American question was clear and consistent. In the year 1766 he had proposed, and carried, the repeal of the Stamp Act; and in 1775 he refused to serve against the colonists without forfeiting the confidence and good-will of his brother soldiers. Conway's valour was above proof, and his authority on strategical questions stood very high. During his earlier campaigns, foregoing his immunities as a staff-officer, he had plunged over and over again into the rough and tumble of cavalry combat; and in the Seven Years'

<sup>7</sup> The tone which Selwyn always used when writing of Crawford was most unjust. Crawford, though too prone to introspection and self-pity, was a man of wit and ability, and a true friend to all the Fox connection. His letters to Lord Ossory,—for whose sister, the young widow of poor Stephen Fox, he had entertained a deep and hopeless affection,—prove that he sincerely repented his past support of the American war.

War, as Major General and Lieutenant General, he had participated with credit in arduous and important operations both by sea and land.

The House of Commons listened with respectful attention to his searching analysis of the military situation. He showed how,—at a time when our shores were under constant threat of invasion, and when there were no spare troops for the relief of our Mediterranean garrisons, or for aggressive operations on European soil,—we maintained on the other side of the Atlantic a far larger British army than the Duke of Marlborough, or Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, had ever led to victory in Flanders or Germany;<sup>8</sup> and how nevertheless, at the crucial moment of the campaign, Clinton and Cornwallis could muster for combat only fourteen thousand rank and file between them. He adjured the Ministry to explain how the strength of our American army had been frittered away in the past, and to indicate, at least in outline, their warlike policy for the future. Welbore Ellis, who had no answer ready, rambled on in a helpless and bewildered strain which provoked derision in some quarters, and compassion in others; and the case was not mended by the interposition of Mr. Jenkinson, the Secretary at War. Jenkinson announced that it was the intention of the Government to convert the war in America into “a war of posts;” and he then proceeded to state, for the information of Honourable Gentlemen, what he meant by that expression. “His idea was that we were to keep no regular army in the field; but, in keeping those posts we had, we might add others to them whenever they should be found advantageous to us; thus affording us the means of attacking the enemy if an opportunity served of doing it with success.” It was a cheerless programme for the eighth year of a war which professed to be a war of re-conquest, and it altogether failed to arouse the enthusiasm of Parliament. Lord North escaped defeat by a bare majority of one vote in a House of three hundred and ninety members. Eight months previously a proposal, to all intents

<sup>8</sup> On this point I am allowed to quote a private letter from Colonel Gerald Boyle. When Sir Guy Carleton succeeded Sir Henry Clinton at New York he took over the Royal troops in America, diminished, (it must be remembered,) by the seven thousand soldiers who had been captured with Lord Cornwallis. “A Return of the Army under Sir Guy Carleton,” writes Colonel Boyle, “shows him to have had quite 31,000 of all ranks under his command, besides 2300 British and German recruits *en route* to join him. General Haldimand had about 4000 in Canada.” I take this last opportunity of expressing my admiration of Colonel Boyle’s researches into the Revolutionary War, and his infinite kindness in placing the fruit of those researches at my disposal.



and purposes the same motion, had been rejected by a hundred and seventy-two votes to ninety-nine,—which was as nearly as possible in the proportion of seven to four.

On the twenty-fifth of February Lord North introduced his Budget. He asked for a Loan larger by a million than the enormous Loan of the preceding year. The Three Per Cents had dropped to 54, and, in order to raise thirteen millions of ready money for present needs, the nation was saddled with an obligation to repay twenty-four millions whenever the Debt came to be liquidated. Those new taxes which North proposed, though vexatious in kind, were insignificant in amount. The war was being fought on credit; and there was a limit even to the credit of Great Britain which, unless a change came over the face of politics, would ere long be reached. Our fighting services in the current year cost three millions more than in the last year, and five millions more than in the last year but one.<sup>9</sup> The war in Europe had gone against us; the attitude of the Northern Powers was hostile and minatory; and, after Yorktown, all prospect of recovering our rebellious Colonies by arms was further off than ever. Such were the circumstances under which, if the King had his way, England was never to make peace with America as long as the Chancellor of the Exchequer could negotiate a loan on the money-market. Our people had come to regard the Cabinet as the shareholders of a coal-mine on the sea-coast, when the water which floods the galleries begins to taste of salt, would regard a board of Directors who persisted in trying to pump out the German Ocean. Parliament at last took the matter into its own hands, and stopped the Ministers in their mad career. It was not a day too soon for the interests of the Treasury. Lord Sheffield,—the friend of Gibbon, a staunch adherent of Lord North, and a specialist in the statistics of foreign and colonial commerce,—reckoned that the increase of the National Debt entailed on Great Britain by the American war, and by the wars arising out of it, amounted to forty-five times the average annual value of British exports to the American colonies during the six years that preceded the military occupation of Boston. That is the measure, as expressed in arithmetical figures, of

<sup>9</sup> During the period anterior to the American trouble the cost of the Army, Navy, and Ordnance Services together did not much exceed three million pounds per annum. In 1780 that cost had risen to near fifteen millions; in 1781 it reached seventeen millions; and in 1782 it passed the point of twenty millions. By the year 1787 Mr. Pitt, as Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer, had brought it down again to four millions and a quarter. It is a figure to make a modern economist's mouth water.

the foresight and capacity displayed by George the Third and his chosen servants.<sup>10</sup>

Two days after the presentation of the Budget Conway, in accordance with notice given, repeated his former motion with a slight change of form, but no change in substance. It was a night when a vote would be a vote; and the Opposition had assembled in full force, and in a determined mood. Fox had summoned all his friends around him.<sup>11</sup> Many of the Ministerialists had scruples about opposing Conway; and many were inclined to support him, including certain young politicians who had a shining and honourable future before them. Such was William Wilberforce, who had been elected for Hull almost immediately after he came of age, and who had begun his parliamentary career by voting with the Government. And such, again, was Sir Gilbert Elliot, afterwards that Earl of Minto who, during seven critical years, was a wise, a conscientious, and a most successful Governor General of India. His father was the late Sir Gilbert Elliot, by far the ablest among the King's Friends; but the son did not inherit any love for the King's system. Burke's great speech on Economical Reform had captured all his sympathies. "From that time," we are told, "dated his friendship with Mr. Burke, which soon ripened into warm and reciprocal affection. But it was not till the Spring of 1782 that he finally abandoned all hope of a favourable issue to the American War."<sup>12</sup>

The supreme hour had struck. Conway put together a weighty and conclusive argument, to which Lord North replied in the doleful and desponding accents of a man who had lost faith in his own cause. It was a severe ordeal for him to face a phalanx of such antagonists without a single speaker of the first order to aid and abet him. Thurlow had been in the House of Lords for some years past. Wedderburn,

<sup>10</sup> *Observations on the Commerce of the American States, by John Lord Sheffield; with an Appendix containing table of the Imports and Exports of Great Britain to and from all Ports, from 1700 to 1783. London; 1784.*

<sup>11</sup> "Your Grace may be very sure," (so Fox wrote to an eminent nobleman,) "that, after what I have heard of Lord Edward's health, and with the regard I have for him, I should not think of wishing him to come to town unless I thought his presence might be very material indeed. \*\*\* I have not written to Lord Edward himself because I had rather you should judge of the propriety of his coming than he, who might be apt to think himself more able to bear it than he really is. If he can come without danger of hurting himself I really think it very material he should. If he cannot, I am sure you yourself can not be more averse to his coming than I should be." It is almost unnecessary to say that Lord Edward came.

<sup>12</sup> That is the account of Sir Gilbert Elliot's change of view, as given by the Countess of Minto in her admirable biography of her great-uncle.

the most eloquent of Law Officers, had recently left the House of Commons, and had taken refuge from coming evils in the Chief Justiceship of the Common Pleas; and it was Mr. Attorney General Wallace who, on behalf of the Government, moved that the debate should be adjourned until that day fortnight. Mr. Pitt denounced him for trifling with the common sense of Parliament; Mr. Sheridan "delighted the House with a most admirable piece of satire;" and Mr. Fox "in a few minutes set the matter in issue in a most clear and forcible point of view. He urged the propriety of the motion made by the Honourable General, and exposed the paltry stratagem to which Ministers were reduced, in the last moments of their existence, to gain a short week, or a day, of breath."<sup>13</sup> At half past one in the morning a division was taken on the Attorney General's motion for adjournment, and the Government was beaten by nineteen votes. "It was the declaration," (wrote Edmund Burke,) "of two hundred and thirty-four members. I think it was the opinion of the whole." Burke rightly interpreted the feeling of the assembly. The original motion was put, and agreed to in silence; and five days afterwards Conway clenched the matter by carrying, without opposition, a Resolution to the effect that all who advised or attempted, the further prosecution of offensive war upon the Continent of America should be considered as enemies to His Majesty, and to the country. No more important decision was ever deliberately, and unanimously, made by the House of Commons.<sup>14</sup>

The centre of political interest was henceforward transferred from the House of Commons to the Royal Closet. The Government had suffered a crushing defeat; but there was one behind the Government who had no inclination whatever to accept that defeat as final. The Opposition leaders had long been aware that, when contending with the Ministry, they were contending with the King. Some months previously Charles Fox had thrilled the House by a fine quotation

<sup>13</sup> *Parliamentary History*, XXII, 1081-1084. After the speeches of the mover, and the Prime Minister, the rest of the debate was very cursorily reported.

<sup>14</sup> Lord North, in a private letter to Lord Dartmouth, commented severely on Conway as having grieved and insulted a monarch who was "his best benefactor." Readers of the Wilkes controversy may be puzzled to understand on what foundation that charge of ingratitude was based. Lord Stanhope, who has no love for the memory of Wilkes, states in his History that "the most eminent lawyers of the day, headed by Chief Justice Pratt," on consideration held General Warrants "to be utterly illegal." And yet, as a punishment for recording a vote against the legality of General Warrants, the King dismissed Conway from his place in the Bedchamber, and deprived him of the Colonelcy of a Regiment which had been conferred upon him as a reward for distinguished services in the field.

from Dante. The Prime Minister, (he said,) was a man of experience. He was naturally inclined to moderation and mildness. "How then was he induced to become so strenuous a supporter of the American war? He might put an answer in the noble Lord's mouth from an Italian poet: 'My will to execute this deed is derived from Him who has both the will and the power to execute it. Ask no further questions.'"<sup>15</sup>

But North's capacity for passive obedience was at last exhausted. Before eleven o'clock in the morning after the division on Conway's motion he informed the King that he could no longer remain in office. George the Third was endowed with a clear insight into the relative values of public men; and he was not mistaken in his belief that Lord North was indispensable. If he commissioned Welbore Ellis, or Rigby, or Lord Nugent, or Jenkinson to lead the House of Commons,—and he no longer had any others to choose from,—the Ministerial party would have gone to pieces within the week. The King endeavoured to recall North to his duty by frequent interviews, and by a series of brief and unstudied letters full of historical interest, and more remarkable still in their bearing on human character. Stern reproofs, and vehement expostulations, alternated with dark allusions to an unexplained course of action by which the Royal chagrin and displeasure would be manifested to the world. "I am resolved," he wrote, "not to throw myself into the hands of Opposition at all events, and shall certainly, if things go as they seem to lead, know what my conscience, as well as honour, dictates as the only way left for me."<sup>16</sup> The King's repugnance to acknowledge the United States as an independent nation was fixed and resolute as ever. He regarded the dispute with his rebellious Colonies as a matter personal to himself; and, if only Parliament had stood by him, he would have fought America as long as he was able to press a sailor, or raise a guinea. George the Third would have been more in his place as a monarch if he had been born four or five centuries before his own epoch. Although he was altogether devoid of the military intuition, and the statesmanlike astuteness, of the First and Third Edwards, he had as high a courage, and a temper as hot, as any Plantagenet that ever swore by the Splendour of God. But he had met his match in an adversary with a will not

<sup>15</sup> *Inferno*; III, 95.

<sup>16</sup> His Majesty, (according to some historians,) had imagined, and had even begun to put in train, a scheme for withdrawing himself out of England, and retiring to his Hanoverian dominions. Authentic evidence on that point is wanting.



less strong, and an intellect far more vivid, than his own. "Here is a man," said Doctor Johnson, "who has divided the Kingdom with Cæsar, so that it was a doubt whether the nation should be ruled by the sceptre of George the Third, or the tongue of Fox;" and in March 1782 matters had come to such a pass for England that the brave old Tory, the author of "Taxation no Tyranny," rejoiced that Fox had got the better of his Sovereign.

The Prime Minister was inexorable, and the King submitted to his fate. After three more weeks of damaging speeches, and crowded and significant divisions, Lord North, exhibiting his habitual good taste and good temper amidst a scene of confusion and excitement, announced that His Majesty had come to a full determination to choose other Ministers. "For himself," (he said,) "he hoped to God, whoever those Ministers might be, they would take such measures as should tend effectually to extricate the country from its present difficulties, and to render it happy and prosperous at home, successful and secure abroad." On Wednesday the twenty-seventh of March 1782 the members of the new Government attended a Levee at Saint James's Palace. "I could not go to Court," wrote George Selwyn. "My temper would not permit. I could have seen my Royal Master on the scaffold with less pain than insulted as he has been to-day."<sup>17</sup>

A crowd of Londoners, who had no sinecures to lose, pointed out to each other the occupants of that line of chariots with more friendly and hopeful feelings than those which actuated poor George Selwyn. Rockingham kissed hands as First Lord of the Treasury. Lord John Cavendish became Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Duke of Richmond Master of the Ordnance, and General Conway Commander-in-Chief of the Forces. Lord Camden was President of the Council, and Dunning Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, with a seat in the House of Peers as Baron Ashburton. The Privy Seal was given to the Duke of Grafton. Thomas Townshend was Secretary at War, Barré Treasurer of the Navy, and Sheridan Under Secretary of State; while Jack Townshend received the Civil Lordship of the Admiralty,—an office which is the due of youth. Dundas, who had trimmed at the right

<sup>17</sup> Gibbon, in strong contradistinction to Selwyn, took his misfortune like the philosopher that he was. When the Board of Trade was abolished he wrote: "I have been prepared for this event, and can support it with firmness. I am not without resources; and my best resource is in the cheerfulness and tranquillity of a mind which in any place, and in any situation, can always secure its own independent happiness. \* \* \* Next Wednesday I conclude my forty-fifth year, and, in spite of the changes of Kings and Ministers, I am very glad that I was born."

moment, remained Lord Advocate; and the King was allowed to insist upon keeping Lord Thurlow as his Chancellor. The most important people in the new Administration were the two Secretaries of State, the Earl of Shelburne, and Charles Fox. On the last occasion that Fox went to a Levee he had brought with him an Address from the Citizens of Westminster. "The King took it out of his hand without deigning to give him a look or a word. He took it as you would take a pocket-handkerchief from your valet-de-chambre, without any mark of displeasure or attention, or expression of countenance whatever, and passed it to his Lord in waiting, who was the Duke of Queensberry." Times had now changed with Charles Fox; and Charles Fox, like a man of sense, had changed a little with the times. He rented a house north of Piccadilly, close to that occupied by Crawford of Auchinanes, the reformed and sobered companion of his early years, in whose rather depressing company, for some while to come, he was content to live. James Hare relates that Fox seldom now looked in at Brooks's, and never dined there, "to the disappointment of those members who had paid up arrears of four or five years' subscription in order that they might enjoy the society of a Minister." It was noticed that the London world, which hitherto had never called him anything but "Charles," began henceforward to speak of him as "Mr. Fox."

Fox, who intended to take the settlement of the Irish difficulty under his own special charge in Parliament, had a great deal to do with the Irish appointments. The Duke of Portland was sent as Viceroy to supersede the Earl of Carlisle at Dublin Castle, with Richard Fitzpatrick,—the lifelong confidant of Fox, and an Irishman to the heart's core,—for his Chief Secretary; and Charles, who was not the man to leave an old friend out in the cold, contrived to procure the Stewardship of the Household for Lord Carlisle. A most judicious and popular selection, which had an immediate influence for good upon the fortunes of England, was the nomination of Keppel as First Lord of the Admiralty. Confidence and alacrity at once revived throughout the whole Naval Service. Famous sailors, Whig and Tory, emerged from their retirement at the invitation of a superior on whose personal loyalty they could rely, and showed their welcome faces once more in Whitehall, and on the quarterdeck. Admiral Harland took his seat at the Board, where he was almost as useful as at sea. Lord Howe hoisted his flag on the *Victory*, the finest vessel in the Channel Fleet; and Admiral Barrington gladly and proudly served under him as the second in command in a quarter where, some years before, he had refused to command in chief.

The day was past and gone when the annual appearance of a combined French and Spanish armada in the Channel sent the British fleet into harbour with the regularity of an autumn manœuvre. Barington, while cruising in the Bay of Biscay, sighted a convoy laden with men for the re-inforcement, and with spars and rigging for the re-equipment, of the Bailli de Suffren's much battered squadron in the East Indies; and, after a smart chase, and a sharp night battle, in which Captain Jervis gained much honour, the British admiral captured a vessel or two of the Line, and thirteen out of nineteen transports and store-ships. Howe himself went outside the Scilly Islands to look for the Jamaica merchant-fleet, the arrival of which was awaited at Bristol, and in the City of London, with anxiety justified by a cruel experience. There was joy and relief on 'Change when it was known that the most skilful of English sailors had brought the Jamaica fleet safe home almost beneath the guns of the enemy; and the news was none the less acceptable because part of the cargo which it carried was the Comte de Grasse, whom Rodney was sending back as a prisoner of war from the West Indies. And in the middle of October 1782, by consummate seamanship, and just as much fighting as was essential for the accomplishment of his purpose, Lord Howe conducted to a successful issue the re-provisioning of the Gibraltar food-stores, and the re-filling of the powder magazine which on the previous thirteenth of September had been emptied with such memorable effect against the Duc de Crillon's floating batteries. Lord Howe's exploit reduced the French and Spanish commanders to despair, and was a prelude to the final abandonment of the siege.

On the twentieth of March 1782 Fox addressed to the House of Commons, and the country, some remarks of weighty import. "It had given him," he said, "great pleasure to hear an Honourable Member say, in a thin house, that he hoped, if His Majesty's Ministers were removed, those who should be appointed in their room would no longer govern by influence and corruption, and that, if persons who had been in Opposition came in, they would religiously adhere to their Opposition principles, and not let it be a mere change of hands without a change of measures."<sup>18</sup> The words of Fox were repeated, and enforced, in eloquent and excellent speeches by Burke and Conway; and, now that they had all three become Ministers, they pro-

<sup>18</sup> *Parliamentary History*; XXII, 1221. The Member to whom Fox referred was probably the Honourable Charles Marsham, afterwards the Earl of Romney. He sat for Kent; and he was one of those independent country gentlemen who, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were the salt of politics.

ceeded without delay to make their words good. Burke, more to the disadvantage of Lord Rockingham's reputation than of his own, had been left outside the Cabinet; but he was appointed to the most lucrative post in England, and probably in the world, for he became Paymaster General of the Forces in the room of Rigby. It was an office which had enabled a long succession of holders to enrich themselves beyond what ought to have been the dreams of avarice by speculating with the balances of public money lying, far longer than they should lie, at their private bankers. Mr. Pitt indeed, as far back as the year 1746, had haughtily refused to traffic in funds which did not properly belong to him, and had paid the interest accruing from the balances into the Exchequer; but Burke went even further, and did not rest until he had made a root-and-branch reform of the objectionable system. He allotted himself a fixed, and not immoderate, salary; and his well-considered arrangements increased the national revenue by nearly fifty thousand pounds a year, a full half of which would otherwise have passed into his own pocket.

Those disinterested motives, which inspired Burke as an individual, pervaded the Government as a whole. The Administration of the day had hitherto exercised a commanding influence at elections through the votes of Tide-waiters, and Gaugers, and Coastguardsmen distributed over scores of boroughs with more regard for the political dominance of the party in power than for the protection of the Revenue. Meanwhile the House of Commons swarmed with Ministerial mercenaries,—sinecurists, and semi-sinecurists, and Court-officials, and favoured contractors, and loan-mongers, and armament-mongers; and holders of secret pensions, dependent on pleasure, whose very names were studiously concealed from the public knowledge; and salaried occupants of colonial appointments who never visited their colony during the entire lifetime of a Parliament. The turn had now come for Lord Rockingham and his colleagues to profit by these monstrous abuses; but they were patriots of another cast from their predecessors, and they lost no time in divesting themselves of advantages which, in their view, did not conduce to the honour of the rulers, or to the welfare of the ruled. Within the first few months of their Ministerial existence they placed on the Statute Book Sir Philip Clerke's Contractors Bill; Mr. Crewe's Bill forbidding Revenue Officers from Voting at Elections; the most valuable provisions of Mr. Burke's Bill for the Better Regulation of His Majesty's Civil Establishments, for the Limitation of Pensions, and for the Suppression of sundry Use-



less, Expensive, and Inconvenient Offices, as well as Lord Shelburne's Bill compelling Persons, holding Places in the West Indies and America, to reside there. The same House of Commons which, when Lord North was its leader, had rejected all such measures by large majorities, accepted them from Charles Fox in silence, and almost with unanimity. The largest minority recorded against any of those admirable laws numbered only fourteen votes. There is no more striking instance of the vital truth that a Government, which marches boldly along the path of probity, will always take the House of Commons with it. A noteworthy compliment has been paid to Lord Rockingham and his associates by an author distinguished for his comprehensive knowledge of our political history, and for his rare impartiality. If a Government, (so Mr. Lecky writes,) is to be estimated by the net result of what it has achieved, it must be acknowledged that few Ministries have done so much to elevate, and to purify, English public life as the Administration which came into power when Lord North fell.

And thus the Ministers, who had brought our country down from the heights of glory and prosperity to the Valley of the Shadow of Disaster, at length were expelled from office, and were succeeded by a Government pledged to restore the independence of Parliament, to re-establish the naval supremacy of Great Britain, to pacify Ireland, and to end the quarrel with America.

VALETE, QUOTQUOT ESTIS,  
AMICI MEI IN UTRAQUE ORA



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*Jacket design by Chris Simon*

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# THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

## A Characteristic Passage from Trevelyan

When, as the central calamity in a long and unbroken series of disasters, the surrender of Lord Cornwallis appeared in the London Gazette it was a foregone conclusion in every quarter, and most of all among Lord George Germaine's colleagues in the cabinet, that Lord George Germaine must go. No one had a word to say in defence of the disgraced and discredited soldier who, as American Secretary, had misdirected two gallant armies to their ruin from his office in Downing Street, three thousand miles across the water. The Minden Court-Martial, when taken in connection with Saratoga and Yorktown, formed a triple burden too heavy for any reputation in the world to bear. The King might have replaced the departing Minister by a far more efficient successor if he had been willing to subordinate his own personal likes and dislikes to the safety of the State. In either House of Parliament there were distinguished soldiers, who at the same time were popular statesmen and tried administrators; but none of them would accept that obligation of implicit subservience to the Royal will, and wholesale adoption of the Royal policy, which their monarch demanded from all his Ministers. If the Archangel Michael had come down from heaven, with an offer to marshal the hosts of England for battle, George the Third would have felt no hesitation in rejecting his services unless he had voted with the Court on the question of the Middlesex Election. In the absolute dearth of public men who were compliant, as well as capable, the King fell back upon the resources of his existing Cabinet, and appointed Welbore Ellis to the post of Secretary of State for the American Department. And so it came to pass that an old official hack, who was now approaching his hundred and fortieth quarter-day, was commissioned by his Sovereign to fill the part of Chatham at a crisis far graver than that which, in June 1759, Chatham himself had been called upon to encounter.



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